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A

# REJOINDER

TO

MR. BANCROFT'S HISTORICAL ESSAY

ON

PRESIDENT REED.

BY

WILLIAM B. REED.



PHILADELPHIA:  
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,  
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Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1867,

By WILLIAM B. REED,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the  
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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MR. BANCROFT has renewed and extended his attack on the memory of President Reed in what he calls an "Historical Essay." It is written in a temper and style so defiant of scholarly and gentlemanly propriety that I am compelled in rejoinder to adopt a less measured tone than I did in my publication of last February.\* Self-respect and a sense of responsibility to the tribunal of literary opinion, never tolerant of vehemence and personality, prevent me from descending to the level to which Mr. Bancroft invites me, but knowing his "Essay," to be untruthful and in every sense dishonest, and that I am able to show it to be so, my duty to the cause of historical truth would not be discharged were I to soften words of exposure and just rebuke.

In my "Reply," so far as it related to Mr. Bancroft, I made certain specific charges which I now re-state :

*First.* That, in citing a letter from Mr. Reed to Robert Morris, of the 18th of July, 1776, on the mission of

\* "President Reed, of Pennsylvania. A reply to Mr. George Bancroft, and others. February, A. D. 1867."

Lord Howe, he not only misrepresented its purport but mutilated its words.

On this direct charge, Mr. Bancroft is silent. There is not a word in the "Essay" about it, I mean as to the charge of misrepresentation and mutilation. He speaks of the letter, but not in the connexion in which I presented it.

*Second.* In saying that Mr. Reed 'deserted to safe quarters within the enemy's lines at Burlington' on the morning of the 25th of December 1776, Mr. Bancroft said what is not true.

To this, he makes no reply except by a modified suggestion that Burlington was 'within the cordon of the posts established by the British.' My knowledge of such matters does not enable me to say whether 'the enemies' lines' and 'the cordon of posts' mean technically the same thing, but, admitting that they do, the statement is groundless. The historical materials in Mr. Bancroft's possession which he so ostentatiously produces when they can be used in defamation show that Burlington at no time, from the 20th to the 26th of December when the Hessians retreated, was within 'the enemies' lines' or 'the cordon of their posts.' The 'Diary' is decisive of this. On the 20th, the Hessian advance was at Crosswicks, and Griffin was, and by the enemy was known to be, at Mount Holly seven miles from Burlington. On the 21st, Donop was at the



Black Horse, and records in his diary (if it be his): “He expected, with longing the arrival of the battalion of Kœhler with the heavy artillery, because, before that, Burlington could not be occupied on account of the gun-boats in the neighbourhood, and Mount Holly could not be held on account of the hills towards Moorestown &c.” On the 22d, Griffin was still at Mount Holly. On this or the next day, he retreated and Donop occupied the village for the first time. On the 24th he was there; on the 25th he sent a flag of truce to Burlington, as an enemy’s post, and remained at Mount Holly till the news from Trenton reached him, never going an inch nearer Burlington. Yet Mr. Bancroft perseveres in his calumny!

*Third.* In saying that Mr. Reed’s letter to Washington of the 22d December, 1776, was written in order to be produced as evidence in his own favour afterwards, Mr. Bancroft said what he knew was not true.

On this point he makes an attempt at defence which I give in his own words:

“We know” says he “that (Reed) certainly did (keep a copy of this letter) for Gordon in his history quotes from it the skillfully selected passages that might serve to glorify Reed. From whom did Gordon get the extract? From Washington or from Reed himself? We have it under Washington’s own hand that he refused to Gordon access to his papers; then it follows that Gordon, who during the war of the Revolution collected papers on all sides, obtained it from Joseph Reed himself, though his

work was not printed till after Reed's death. So then Gordon's story of Reed's suggestion of the affair of Trenton is traced to none other than to Joseph Reed."

There is not the least authority for such a statement. On this point, there is abundant evidence, negative and positive, perfectly well known to Mr. Bancroft. No trace of intimacy or of relations of any kind between Gordon and Mr. Reed can be found. Gordon was in Virginia, rummaging among Gates' papers in 1781, but had no acquaintance with the President of Pennsylvania.\* He was at work on his history in August 1785, and then Mr. Reed was in his grave. The few references to Reed in his History show that Gordon was no friend, but belonged to the school which was always harping on the Adjutant General's hostility to Eastern men.†

On the other hand, with General Washington, during and subsequent to the war, Gordon was on terms of extreme friendliness, and Mr. Bancroft not only has no authority for the broad assertion that access to the Washington papers was refused, but he knows that it was not so. The refusal, such as it was, was limited to public papers, for, in 1785, Washington sent to Gordon

\* Gordon, Vol. 3, p. 59. Vol. 4, p. 436.

† "No small animosity," he says, "prevailed in 1776 between the troops of the Northern and Southern States, occasioned by general and illiberal reflections freely dealt out at Head-quarters. It was not countenanced by the Commander-in-Chief, but the Adjutant General assiduously endeavoured to make and promote it."—Vol. ii., pp. 324, 327.



private documents as well as a statement of his own reminiscences relative to Fort Washington. Later in the same year, he sent him memoranda for history. In 1788 Washington expressed a deep interest in the 'History' then going to the press, and in Mr. Sparks' "Letters to Washington" is one from Gordon, in which he speaks of having been at Mount Vernon after the war and having read and examined Washington's revolutionary manuscripts, among which was, and there Mr. Sparks found it nearly half a century afterwards, Mr. Reed's letter of the 22d December, 1776.\* Gordon often gives extracts from private letters which he could have obtained only from Washington. In his Preface he says "I made known my design of compiling this history to the late commander-in-chief of the American army; and meeting with the desired encouragement from him I applied myself to the procuring of the best materials whether oral, written, or printed." "I was indulged" he adds, "by the late Generals Washington, Gates, Greene, Lincoln and Otho Williams, with a liberal examination of their papers both of a public and a more private nature." In the Monthly Magazine for July, 1800, is a communication from Gordon in these words:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

SIR:

The following are extracts from letters of the late General

\* Sparks' Writings of Washington, Vol. ix, pp. 28, 100, 121, 295, 467. Mr. Reed's letter of 22d Dec. '76 is in Vol. iv., p. 541.

Letters to Washington, Vol. iv., p. 436.

Washington, to whose papers I had free access, when residing at his house for weeks, while procuring materials for the History of the American Revolution; and of some written to myself.

Yours,

W. GORDON.

Knowing all this perfectly well, Mr. Bancroft asserts that Washington refused access to his papers, and that, therefore, Mr. Reed must have furnished a copy to Gordon; although, in 1782, Reed wrote to Washington, that, while he recollected such a letter, he had it not.

*Fourth.* Mr. Bancroft grossly misrepresented the facts when he said that Mr. Reed withdrew his resignation as Adjutant General, in consequence of “a cold rebuke from Washington.”

To this he replies, that, the “rebuke” was contained in Washington’s letter of the 30th November, 1776, inclosing Lee’s. I have no objection to re-produce this letter, often as it has been in print, and I beg for it the reader’s closest scrutiny. Where is there one word of “rebuke,” as to resignation? where is the semblance of anything but regret at the Lee correspondence? (of which I shall speak hereafter) where is the reproof for unfulfilled duty?

*Brunswick, November 30, 1776*

“DEAR SIR:—The inclosed was put into my hands by an express from the White Plains. Having no idea of its being a private letter, much less suspecting the tendency of the correspondence, I opened it, as I had done all other letters to you



from the same place and Peekskill, upon the business of your office, as I conceived and found them to be.

"This, as it is truth, must be my excuse for seeing the contents of a letter, which neither inclination nor intention would have prompted me to.

"I thank you for the trouble and fatigue you have undergone in your journey to Burlington, and sincerely wish that your labors may be crowned with the desired success. My best respects to Mrs. Reed.

"I am, dear sir, your most obedient servant,

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

The "Dear Sir," twice repeated, and, "my best respects to Mrs. Reed," are hardly consonant with "cold and cutting rebuke." This is another of Mr. Bancroft's defamatory fictions, and, in exposing it anew, I pause incidentally to show the disingenuousness by which, in his "Essay," he tries to prop up this patent perversion.

"Others" says he "have called this a cold and cutting rebuke." I was, at first, at a loss to imagine who the "others" were; for, in a very thorough and exhaustive study of this subject, I had no recollection of such a word as "rebuke," being applied by any accredited writer. At last I discovered to whom Mr. Bancroft so triumphantly alludes. In the "General Index" to Irving's Life of Washington, prepared, no doubt, by some clerk, under the title "Reed," is this: "Rebuke from Washington, Vol. II, p. 443," but the reader will find, on reference to Mr. Irving's text, that, although there is a condemnation of the Lee correspondence, of which

I do not at all complain, the word, "rebuke," does not occur, nor is the idea suggested: this was reserved for Mr. Bancroft's perverse ingenuity, his tendency to darken everything; a disposition wholly alien to Washington Irving's gentle, tolerant nature. I shall have occasion, in another connexion, to refer to this matter of the resignation; it is noted here in a recapitulation of the charges I made against Mr. Bancroft, and which he has failed to meet.

*Fifth.* The last of the specifications which I made, was as to the manipulation of the Hessian Diary.

The time is not<sup>d</sup> distant, when students will think with amazement, of Mr. Bancroft's experiment on the credulity of his readers, in this matter of the Hessian diary. In order to prove an American officer of high rank guilty of treason, for taking a protection was treason, he uses the fragment of a hostile diary, written in very perplexed German by some unknown person, who, without understanding one word of English, records what he imagines, and what is reported to him to have been said when he was not present; and records it, too, in language so perplexed, if not ungrammatical, as to make interpretation of the commonest phrases doubtful; and says he does not believe it himself. Such, literally, is what Mr. Bancroft has attempted; knowing all the while, and, if I am not mis-informed, having said so, that Colonel Reed never took a pro-

tection, nor dreamed of doing so. Without an apparent scruple, he embodies this, as truth, in History; mutilating it, as I have shown, to suit his own purposes. There is no form of moderate words with which to describe such utter want of common fairness; so gross an outrage on the integrity of letters.

As to this there can be no mistake. My charge was, not that Mr. Bancroft made a mis-translation of the Diary, for he gave none; nor that, as he now imagines, he printed the offensive passage in a note and not in the text; but, I averred and I re-assert, that in a quotation he mutilated a sentence, giving as truth the part which was false, and suppressing the context which showed the writer thought it was false. Here is the passage, the translation corrected according to Mr. Bancroft's notion; why, again I ask, were the italicised words suppressed, which are given in English and German?

“*Die Nachrichten vom Feinde  
wären so verworren, dass er fast  
keine mehr anhören möge. In-  
dessen sollten am 19th. hujus,  
wie er zu Mount Holly gewesen,  
wirklich 1000 über Haddonfield  
und 700 über Moorestown in  
Anmarsch gegen Mount Holly  
gewesen sein um die beiden Bat-  
tail: zu Black Horse zu atta-  
quieren. Der Gen. Mifflin solle  
wirklich mit einem Corps auf  
der route nach Moorestown bis*

“*The reports about the enemy  
were so confused that he would  
not listen any more to them.  
Nevertheless, he would report  
that it was reported to him that  
during his stay at Mount Holly  
on the 19th inst., 1000 men,  
via Haddonfield and 700 via  
Moorestown, had been marching  
against Mount Holly for the  
purpose of attacking the two bat-  
talions at the Black Horse,  
(that) General Mifflin had ad-*



*an die 3 Meilen von Mount Holly befindliche Brücke vorgerückt sein, aber nichts weiteres unter nommen, als diese Brücke gänzlich zu ruiniren. "Der Oberst Reed, der neulich eine protection erhalten, sēye dem General Mifflin entgegen gekommen, und habe demselben declarirt, dass er nicht gesonnen sēy weiteres zu dienen, worauf ihm Mifflin sehr hart begegnete und ihn sogar einen dem Rascal geheissen habe."*

*vanced with one corps on the route leading to Moorestown to the bridge three miles from Mount Holly, but had done nothing except to destroy the bridge entirely; (that) the Colonel Reed, who recently received a protection, had come to meet General Mifflin and had declared that he did not intend any longer to serve; whereupon Mifflin is said to have treated him very harshly and even to have called him a damned rascal."*

If there is any explanation of this in the "Essay," I have not been able to find it. Nothing is discussed but a question of mis-translation; whether the Diary should read, "Colonel Reed having taken a protection," or, "Colonel Reed, who took a protection;" or another, which I did not raise: why the quotation was not put in the text,—but not a word as to the reason for misleading the reader, by suppressing a material, in fact essential, part of the context. When, in my "Reply," I said, that words were wanting to express my sense of this literary enormity, I thought I used language so appropriate and so strong, as to arouse any latent sense of shame in Mr. Bancroft's breast. I have failed, however, and he actually, in his "Essay," sinks to the lower level of making it a matter almost of jocularity, that the Ger-

man officers at their camp-fires amused themselves with stories of "Reed's treachery and his having obtained a protection, and of Mifflin's enmity."\* No doubt, the Hessian camps were resonant with rumours in disparagement of American patriots. Mount Holly was the centre of a neighbourhood where the Odells and Lawrences (whose descendants, in this our day, are busy in kindred defamation) and others, were at work in the manufacture of slanderous gossip. It was gossip which Count Donop, a brave and apparently generous man, refused to "listen to." It was noted, probably, by one of his clerks, with an expression of incredulity; and the record of discredited slander has survived, to be dressed up and manipulated by Mr. Bancroft!

To this he pleads guilty.

Having shown that, in no instance has Mr. Bancroft met the specific charges as to inaccuracy and untruthfulness, I might, in professional language, here rest my case; but, a determination, so far as in me lies, to put an end to this sort of defamation, and to make an example of one who writes history so dishonestly, induces me to go further, and to meet Mr. Bancroft on the ground to which he challenges me: 'President Reed's merits as a patriot from the beginning to the end.' Let the reader bear in mind, the initiation of all this is no work of mine.

\* Essay p. 28.

Mr. Bancroft's Essay is a review of Mr. Reed's life of forty-three years (for it was as short as well as an eventful career) from his birth at Trenton, to his death "a private citizen" in Philadelphia. In this review, every act without exception is censured; and no good motive or impulse is conceded. Mr. Bancroft even stoops to attack Mr. Reed's private character, as to which, until this "Essay" appeared, no whisper of reproach had ever been uttered; and while he was coining or burnishing his words of reproach, there lay before him the record of Mr. Reed's life, illustrated by private correspondence, showing him to have been (aside from all question of public merit) a kind and gentle and affectionate son and brother and husband and father.

"Complaints are made," says a writer who is alluded to in Mr. Bancroft's 'Essay,' "and sometimes with justice, of the licentiousness of writers of this day; but modern libellers are mild, candid and cautious, compared with those of the Augustan age of English literature, when engaged in political controversy. Private character, which is now almost invariably respected, was then attacked with unfeeling exaggeration of what was true, and with unmixed inventions of malignant falsehood."\*

Mr. Bancroft, in his Essay on Mr. Reed, has gone back to the "Augustan" models, although, in his scrutiny he finds but one blemish, professional "rapacity

\* Lord Campbell, "Lives of the Chancellors."



and avarice," for which, Mr. Reed dying a poor man, leaving to his five motherless children little beside his good name, he cites as authority a personal enemy, General Cadwalader; and something purporting to have come from the British commander-in-chief, Sir Guy Carleton, who, in view of a contribution to the treasures of gossip, is described as 'a man of great moderation and candour.' I re-produce this passage from the 'Essay' of Mr. Bancroft, who is never so contented as when quoting from German, or French, or English defamation of his own countrymen.

Thus, Bancroft says Sir Guy Carleton reports of Mr. Reed:—

"Mr. Joseph Reed is a native of New Jersey; his parents were persons in the middle state of life; he received a good education, and, before the commencement of the present war, practised law in the Superior Court of Pennsylvania, and was esteemed eminent in his profession. The public papers will convey to you a better idea of this person than anything I can say in respect to his character as a statesman. In his private character he is a man of polite address, a good fluency of speech, exceedingly artful, much attached to his interest, and ambitious of being respected as a great man. He is possessed of some good qualities, but his *avarice* casts a shade over them. This failing has so great an ascendancy over him, that he does not blush to let his own brother go through the streets of Philadelphia sawing wood, and doing common labor round the docks."—*In Sir Guy Carleton's* No. 60, of 15th March, 1783.

Reading this as genuine, one smiles at the trash which, eighty years ago, was written to great Governments, its

singular preservation, when so much that is really valuable has faded away, and the mischievous use which may be made of a trifling slander thus embalmed. The British Commander-in-Chief at the end of a great war writing home about an individual enemy's private failings and his 'brother sawing wood around the docks,' and a grave Historian cherishing the wretched gossip in his 'note book' and using it in literary controversy!

But the reader will be astonished to find what the truth is with regard to this paper. Mr. Bancroft unquestionably conveys the idea—in fact distinctly says that he cites a letter from Sir Guy Carleton. At page 64 he gives its very words as "Sir Guy Carleton's No. 60." At page 48 he speaks of "The account sent home by Sir Guy Carleton who was a man of great moderation and candour." On the next page (49), he refers to "the accounts sent by Carleton"—and speaks of a quotation as "in the letters of Sir Guy Carleton to the Secretary of State, March 15 and April 13, 1783."

Thanks to the good offices of friends in Great Britain, I have procured a copy of these documents from the Public Record office. They are before me as I write. They are open to the inspection of any one who desires to examine them; and they are not letters of Sir Guy Carleton, but Reports made by a nameless spy or paid informer in the City of Philadelphia. The temptation to print them *in extenso* is very great, but to do so would

be to repeat the wrong Mr. Bancroft has done and give pain to the innocent living who have taken no part in these controversies. They contain nothing but frivolous and malignant gossip, and are utterly worthless—and Mr. Bancroft, in conveying the idea that this trash was written by Sir Guy Carleton or was ‘Sir Guy Carleton’s’ in any sense said what he knew was not true. It is a gross imposition.\*

Generally the stories of spies and detectives are untrustworthy, and in this case, the report as to Mr. Reed is an absolute fiction. He had two brothers, neither resident of Philadelphia. The elder, Mr. Bowes Reed lived in Burlington, and was a man of easy fortune. The following letter taken from private correspondence, and never before printed simply because it relates to family matters which Mr. Bancroft and Sir Guy Carleton’s emissary have now dignified, will show Mr. Reed’s actual relations to his other brother.

\* A gentleman in England, whose name I withhold simply because I have no wish or right to involve him in my controversies, writes to me, after a careful examination of these records, “The facts and extracts I give you seem to lead directly to the conclusion that the papers in question do not profess to contain the opinions of Sir Guy Carleton, but those of some person paid to procure and send him intelligence from the quarters of the revolted colonists,—a class of persons whose statements and opinions, the world at large does not view with much respect. \* \* \* Clearly, none of these papers were written by Sir Guy Carleton.”—MS. Letter, London, August 30th, 1867.



## MR. REED TO MR. DE BERDT.

*New Jersey, Feb. 20, 1777.*

“The bearer of this is my half-brother who has been bred to trade but thrown out of all his prospects by the unhappy state of public affairs. I have therefore concluded to send him to Europe by the only conveyance this country now affords,—where he may acquire some knowledge of foreign languages and perhaps lay a foundation of future connexions. If he delivers you this it will most probably be in consequence of his being taken by some British cruiser, and in that case he will be stripped of the money he takes for necessary expenses. In such case he must depend upon you to relieve his necessities which you will do in the most frugal manner and return him as soon as possible. Or if he can be of use to you in your counting-house as a clerk I think his time will be well spent, and he is not of a temper so aspiring as to be above that station, if you can find employ for him. His parts are not of the brightest kind but he has a good disposition very tractable, not addicted to any vice that I know of, and I believe in point of fidelity and honesty may be thoroughly depended on. Having been taken from school and put apprentice where he has been kept down to business, you will find him little acquainted with the world. He will therefore have need of your advice and direction in a special manner, particularly with regard to his company. He has some turn for reading which may preserve him from dangerous amusements. He has no fortune so that having his own industry wholly to rely upon he will implicitly comply with what you think best for him.”

The lad thus sent to Europe by Mr. Reed's bounty, at a time when means were very narrow remained abroad till long after the war. Thus disappears Mr. Bancroft's

witness to Mr. Reed's "avarice," 'the wood sawing brother.'

I hesitate, for it seems to be trifling with the reader's patience, to point out, in this connexion, another of Mr. Bancroft's mutilations which though minute is characteristic. I give it without comment:—

"In August 1782 General Greene who was Reed's friend described him 'as pursuing wealth with avidity,' being convinced that to have power you must have riches."\*

The unmutilated passage is this, in a letter to Charles Pettit:—

"I have not a line from Governor Reed for a long time. I suppose he is buried in business, pursuing wealth with avidity, being convinced that to have power you must have riches. His letters are both instructive and entertaining."

Can this be called a 'description' of Mr. Reed's rapacity? His 'avarice' must, by the by, have been intermittent, for, in November, 1778, Walter Stewart wrote to General Wayne (and this letter was sent to me by Mr. Bancroft as recently as December, 1859):—

"The Treasury is entirely drained, but the President Mr. Reed has offered to lend £1000 to purchase necessities, and he intends to propose it to other gentlemen to spare such sums as are convenient to put matters on a proper footing."

\* Essay, p. 49.

To Mr. Bancroft's review of Mr. Reed's career, I can oppose but one thing,—the record of a life illustrated by public and private correspondence, with the filial comment which years ago I put upon it,—a record, which, when better feeling prevailed, Mr. Bancroft said was 'a most valuable contribution to historical literature' and, strange to say, a tribute to 'the memory of my ancestor'—which, in the compilation of his 'History,' he has used without stint, though always without acknowledgment and which, at the end of twenty years, survives, the only Pennsylvania biography, without its accuracy being impeached or its fairness disparaged. It was disfigured by no spoils of the grave twisted into historical paradoxes in Mr. Bancroft's fashion. There is in it no word which is not truthful and certainly no one of injustice to the dead or wilful pain to the living. I trust I may be pardoned for thus speaking of my own work, to which all my early life was devoted, and of which, the animating motive, called into new life by the defamation of this day, was rational pride in the good name which had come down to me. This record, in its entirety, I oppose, without further reference to the general subject, to Mr. Bancroft's 'Essay.'

With one thing the reader cannot fail to be struck, that all the materials of defamation which Mr. Bancroft uses and perverts, aside from his foreign resources, come from 'the grandson's' biography. That biography was



meant to contain exact truth;—It was intended that Mr. Reed should, as far as possible, tell his own story—and I re-affirm, what was stated with emphasis in my former pamphlet, that there is no American biography with so thorough a revelation of a public man's inner nature and thoughts and motives, as in the letters to his wife—his cherished and devoted wife, who, Mr. Bancroft falsely insinuates, was handed over with her little children, as hostages to the Hessians—to his relatives, to his friends at home and abroad; all was given without alteration or suppression. If Mr. Reed favoured or opposed this or that line of policy; if, with Robert Morris, he doubted the expediency of declaring Independence; if he preferred the continuance of the Old Pennsylvania Assembly; if he thought the discipline of the army defective, and believed or fancied that Washington hesitated too much, or too often, or once—all this was fairly stated. But for my book, Mr. Bancroft would have had no materials to work with.

I now proceed to consider the matters of detail.

#### I. THE DARTMOUTH CORRESPONDENCE OF 1774, '75.

This first appeared in print in my Biography in 1847. And here on the threshold I pause on a minute misrepresentation. Mr. Bancroft says that Mr. Reed kept copies of these letters, and calls attention to a discrepancy between the written and printed letters. If the reader

will turn to the Life of Reed, with every word of which Mr. Bancroft is familiar, he will find that, when my book was printed, I had no copies but only imperfect draughts in some cases so much defaced as to be scarcely intelligible.\* From these draughts I printed, the copies from the originals in England not reaching me till all but my Preface had gone through the press. According to my recollection, the copies, when recovered, were lent to Mr. Bancroft. Writing of these letters in 1775, Mr. Reed said to a friend :

“Mrs. Reed writes me that she consulted you on the malicious report propagated by Sheriff Lee and Ewing that I was acting a double part upon this occasion. I should not be desirous of disclosing my letters to Lord Dartmouth, but I have no reason to be afraid of doing so if necessary. No such letters have yet been published. I only communicated to him transactions earlier than he found them in the newspapers. I gave no opinions but what led to a renunciation of the present system. I avowed my own principles that the right of taxation was incompatible with the ideas of our rights derived under the British Constitution, and cautioned him against trusting to letters and advices from this country of men holding or seeking office. In my first letter I absolutely disclaimed all office or reward for myself. The general sentiments I am sure would be approved ; some might find fault with particular expressions. But even this, I have dropped, finding Lord Dartmouth did not resign, as I expected. I have not written to him since the beginning of last February, though he has through Mr. DeBerdt solicited it strongly. I never received but one letter from him, which was a long expostulation on my principles, and a vindication of his

\* Essay, p. 8. Life of Reed, Vol. I., p. 51.

system, to which I made as good a reply as I could. With common candour my friends need have no fear for me. The open and decisive part I have taken in public affairs, your loss of office, and every other circumstance, I think, must evidently prove my fidelity to the cause I have espoused, or I must have been an idiot.”\*

Commenting on this, Mr. Bancroft says :

“ During his stay in England Reed formed those relations which, through his brother-in-law, Dennis De Berdt, led to his becoming the volunteer correspondent, or rather the volunteer informer, of Lord Dartmouth, who then, as American minister, controlled the distribution of offices in America. His first letter to Dartmouth, dated the 22d of December, 1773, derives its importance for the present examination only from this : In 1775, Reed fell under a suspicion of playing a double part in these letters, and his defence was : “ In my first letter I absolutely disclaimed all office or reward for myself.” Now, in truth, there is in this first letter no disclaimer of office or reward, so that Reed met a charge of duplicity by an answer which had no foundation in fact ; and there was the less occasion for so great a mis-statement, as he kept a copy of his letters.”†

Mr. Bancroft is for once correct in a minute criticism, for the disclaimer of office by Mr. Reed for himself and his friends was not in a letter to Lord Dartmouth but in one to Mr. De Berdt to be shown to the Minister.‡

\* Life of Reed, Vol. I., p. 97.

† Essay, p. 8.

‡ Life of Reed, Vol. I. p. 42.

I have, since the appearance of this 'Essay' re-read with great care the correspondence with Lord Dartmouth and my own almost forgotten comment on it, which I here reproduce as the best answer to Mr. Bancroft's ungenerous criticism, begging the reader to remember that when he was writing the portion of his 'history' which related to the time this correspondence covered, though he had the copies in his possession and knew all about them, he never whispered a word kindred to those he now so glibly writes. He knew then, as he knows now, that the letters of Mr. Reed to Lord Dartmouth were, in every way, creditable and, as revealing the fact that the Ministry knew the truth about America, invaluable as materials for history. It has been lately said or conjectured that it is possible, had Lord George Germaine or Lord North had so truth-telling and honest a correspondent as Mr. Reed, some of their rash measures of coercion might have been arrested. Lord Mahon in his *History of England* comments with kindness and good sense on the letters in which Mr. Bancroft in his latter days sees so much mischief.\* My own view twenty years ago was this:

"Throughout all the letters to the Minister, which from this time became less frequent, there is a subdued tone of expression little consonant with the temper of

\* *History of England*, Vol. VI. Chapter 51.



the writer's mind. A different strain of feeling pervaded Mr. Reed's intercourse with others. His letters to his friends were the unrestrained expression of his zeal and patriotic fervour, made in the security that confidence would not be abused. To the Minister he wrote under the restraint which the peculiarity of their relations produced, and with a degree of reserve as to his own participation in public affairs which was requisite to give his communications the effect that he desired. This caution was urged upon him in every letter from Mr. De Berdt, who felt an anxious interest in the success of measures of conciliation, and to whose inspection all the letters were submitted. His fear was, and it does not appear unreasonable, that if the Minister regarded his correspondent as a violent partisan, though he could not view him otherwise than as a decided advocate of colonial privileges, he would disregard his opinions as emanating from the sources which were obnoxious to ministerial displeasure.'\*"

But that it would expand this publication too much, I should be glad to re-produce this correspondence at length, and especially the letters of September, 1774, and then ask the judgment of any candid reader on the purity and integrity of the motives which prompted a man to write as Mr. Reed did. How little real differ-

\* Life of Reed, vol. 1, pp. 84, 85.

ence there was between the letters to private friends, and to his official correspondent, will be apparent from the citations which Mr. Bancroft is especially careful to keep out of view:—

TO MR. QUINCY.

“Our operations have been almost too slow for the accumulated sufferings of Boston. Should this bloodless war fail of its effect, a great majority of the Colonies will make the last appeal, before they resign their liberties into the hands of any ministerial tyrant.”—*25th Oct., 1774.*

TO LORD DARTMOUTH.

“The Americans are certainly determined never to submit to the claims of Parliament, unless compelled to do so by irresistible force; and this submission will never continue longer than the force which produces it. However visionary it may appear at first view, to give up the commerce of the whole country, and in the last resort to try their strength in arms with so potent a nation as Great Britain, your Lordship may depend upon it, they will try both.”—*15th October, 1774.*

TO MR. DE BERDT.

“We are indeed on the melancholy verge of civil war. United as one man, and breathing a spirit of the most animating kind, the Colonies are resolved to risk the consequences of opposition to the late edicts of parliament. All ranks

TO LORD DARTMOUTH.

“The King’s Speech was received with a kind of sullenness which I cannot describe, but is strongly expressive of a resolution and spirit not to submit without a struggle, in case no conciliatory measures are adopted by Great Britain.

of people, from the highest to the lowest, speak the same language and will act the same part."—*26th Sept., 1774.*

There is scarcely a man in this country, My Lord, in or out of office not of immediate appointment from England, who will not oppose taxation by the British Parliament!

This country will be deluged with blood, before it will submit to any other taxation than that by their own Legislation."  
—*10th February, 1775.*

Such was the last letter written to Lord Dartmouth, for, after the sword was drawn in April at Lexington, all correspondence ceased, and he who wrote so boldly and truthfully is described by Mr. Bancroft as 'an informer,' and a mercenary suppliant for office! Though even to do this he has to resort to his chronic habit of mutilation.\*

# II. MR. REED AS SECRETARY TO WASHINGTON, AND IN THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSEMBLY OF 1776.

Kindred to the perversion of history as to the Dartmouth Letters is that with respect to Mr. Reed's con-

\* This will be seen, with all the parade of italics, at page 12 of the Essay, where the following sentence in immediate context is suppressed: "My opinion of the system of Colony administration must be wholly changed, before I can give my support to any measure of the British government founded upon it."—I. Life of Reed, p. 98.

duct in the early part of 1776. The Bancroft venom here is concentrated. He says that Mr. Reed joined Washington's staff at Cambridge "because very exaggerated opinions prevailed in Philadelphia of the strength of the New England army around Boston" that he left it, after four months' restless and discontented service, to take his place in the Pennsylvania Assembly to which he had been elected; that during his term of legislative service, he thwarted the measures of 'the advanced patriots;' and, that "he rejoined the army so as to avoid the necessity of voting on measures of the last resort."\*

I think I state this series of untruths accurately. The aggregate is untrue; the detail is untrue; and Mr. Bancroft knew it all to be untrue. The minute inaccuracies are amusing:—"On the 3d of January, 1776, the Pennsylvania Convention met in Philadelphia, and elected Joseph Reed, President."† This is not so. No Convention met in Philadelphia in January, 1776: it was in January, 1775.—"In July, Reed goes to New England on the staff of Washington." This is not true, for Mr. Reed went to New England in June, accompanying General Washington thither from Philadelphia as a private citizen; and Mr. Bancroft has in his possession printed letters showing this to be so. He was announced in General Orders as Secretary in July, but he

\* Essay, page 12.

† Essay, pp. 11, 12.



went to New England weeks before. This is certainly very 'loose' historical writing.

The true mode, however, of answering such conglomerate misrepresentations is to state the exact truth.

Let it be clearly understood that Mr. Reed was in favour, as a mode of redress, of continuing the Charter Legislative Institutions; of maintaining the Constitutional relations of the colonies to Great Britain; and at the time of its Declaration opposed to Independence; and even after it was declared, not averse to reconciliation with the Mother Country, if the pretensions of Parliamentary supremacy were renounced and the constitutional rights of the colonies recognized and secured. I cannot make a more candid statement of his opinions, and this in my biography was done long ago. These were the views, not only of Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Willing, but of 'advanced patriots' such as Charles Thomson and Robert Morris and David Rittenhouse and James Wilson. 'Wilson,' says Mr. Bancroft, 'was listened to with disgust;' 'Morris was opposed to it,' and yet Wilson and Morris signed the Declaration and were as true to the cause as any.\* But, being thus opposed to precipitate measures, Mr. Reed was ready, the moment the crisis of arms came, to take his share of duty and of danger. Writing to his wife, in September, '76, from Washing-

\* Bancroft's 'History,' Vol. VIII., p. 313.

ton's Camp, he says: "When I look round and see how few of those who talked so largely of death and honour are around me, and that those who are here are those from whom it was least expected, as the Tilghmans, etc., I am lost in wonder and surprise—your noisy sons of liberty I find the quietest in the field."\* The last sad years of our American history, furnish a close parallel for those who thought and acted as did Mr. Reed in 1776. It is that of the gallant men who resisted by word and vote and counsel the secession of the Southern States from the Federal Union in 1861; who thought it perilous and ill-advised; from whom, as one of them has said, 'the Ordinances of Secession wrung bitter tears of grief;' and yet who, when the deed was done and the die was cast, stood by the cause and fought bravely and suffered deeply. It does not disturb the parallel that, in the one case the cause of Independence failed and in the other it succeeded; the hesitation and the action were the same.

'The exaggerated reports of the strength of the New England army round Boston,' tempted Mr. Reed to join Washington. So says Mr. Bancroft. Now let us see what the truth is. No fact is better ascertained than that when Mr. Reed was one of Washington's escort from Philadelphia, he had no idea of attaching himself to the

\* I. Life of Reed, p. 231.

service. He had no military knowledge or experience. It was his personal association with Washington that led him to continue the journey. "Washington's friendship to Mr. Reed," says a kinder and more truthful historian than Mr. Bancroft, "was frank and cordial; and the confidence he reposed in him full and implicit. Reed in fact became, in a little time, the intimate companion of his thoughts, his bosom counsellor. He felt the need of such a friend in the present exigency, placed as he was, in a new and untried situation, and having to act with persons hitherto unknown to him. Mr. Reed had strong common sense, unclouded by passion and prejudice, and a pure patriotism which regarded everything as it bore upon the welfare of his country."\* This surely is a more reasonable solution of Mr. Reed's conduct than the Bancroft imaginings as to the multitudinous 'New England array round Boston.'

And the 'four months' at Cambridge, how were they passed? In restlessness or discontent? Did he write a word of despondency or doubt? He was Washington's 'bosom friend and counsellor.' It was not the 'infection of enthusiasm' which bound him in close sympathy to his Chief, but conscientious admiration of his noble traits.† Mr. Reed writes with uniform content-

\* I. Irving's *Washington*, p. 16.

† *Hamilton's Republic*, Vol. II, p. 174. A very close and natural sympathy seems latterly to bind together Mr. Bancroft and Mr. J. C.

ment, except as to separation from his young and dependent family. "Our camp continues very healthy. Provisions of all kinds cheap and plenty and, what is of more consequence, discipline and good order prevail more and more every day. A company of Virginia Riflemen came yesterday very healthy and in good spirits." "Good health," says he again, "good humour and a noble candour prevail through the whole camp." Later he says, "Boston must, I fear, be given up for the common safety. The army and navy here must at all events be destroyed this winter. Should it be reinforced, the consequences to America will be dreadful. I preach this doctrine with all my might and hope the Committee of Congress, who are expected here this week, will confirm it. The General is anxious to strike some decisive stroke and would have done it before this if it had not been misrepresented to him."

Does any one recognize in him who could write so earnestly and cheerfully, the halting, half-hearted, 'shuffling, pusillanimous, irresolute trimmer' Mr. Bancroft paints?

Nor did he leave or think of leaving Washington till all idea of an offensive movement was by the decision of a Council of War abandoned. Speaking of the state of

Hamilton. Mr. Bancroft's relations to other descendants of Philip Schuyler are by no means so friendly.



things in the New England camp round Boston, it was Washington, not Reed, who said:—"Could I have foreseen the difficulties that have come upon us, could I have known that such a backwardness would have been discovered in the old soldiers in the service, all the Generals upon earth should not have convinced me of the propriety of delaying an attack upon Boston." He writes to Reed on 28th of November, 1775:—"Such a dirty, mercenary spirit pervades the whole that I should not be at all surprised at any disaster that may happen. Could I have foreseen what I have and am likely to experience, no consideration upon earth should have induced me to accept the command."\* All this, Mr. Ban-

\* In 1859, Mr. Bancroft sent me the following extracts from a letter of Washington to Richard Henry Lee, dated 29 August, 1775. It illustrates Washington's opinion of 'the New England army round Boston.' "As we have now nearly completed our lines of defence, we have nothing more in my opinion to fear from the enemy provided we can keep our men to their duty and make them watchful and vigilant, but it is among the most difficult tasks I ever undertook in my life to induce these people to believe there is any danger till the bayonet is pushed at their breasts; not that it proceeds from any uncommon prowess, but rather from an unaccountable kind of stupidity in the lower classes of these people, which believe me prevails but too generally among the officers of the Massachusetts part of the army who are nearly of the same kidney with the privates." \* \* \* "I have made a pretty good slam among such kind of officers as the Massachusetts Government abounds in since I came to this camp, having broke one Colonel and two Captains for cowardly behaviour in the action on Bunker's Hill; two Captains for drawing more provisions and pay than they had men in their company, and one for being absent from his post when the enemy appeared there and burnt a house just by it. Besides

croft, on his theory of adulation and disparagement, studiously ignores, passing it by with something like a sneer at the 'four months' service' and Mr. Reed's 'professions of fidelity.' He seems incapable of knowing what an honest and generous friendship means.

Mr. Reed left camp on the 29th of October, 1775, and then began the remarkable series of private letters from Washington which have attracted so much attention and, accidentally, as to their style, provoked much controversy. Mr. Bancroft has not, either in his history or his 'Essay,' a word about them. It was Washington Irving who had the heart to say :

"How precious are these letters ! And how fortunate that the absence of Reed from camp should have procured for us such confidential outpourings of Washington's heart, at this time of its great trial."\*

It is not at all necessary for vindication to quote from this continuous and protracted correspondence evidence of Washington's affectionate regard, and of his craving for Mr. Reed's return to him.

these I have at this time one Colonel, one Major, one Captain and two subalterns under arrest for trial. In short I spare none, and yet fear it will not all do, as these people seem to be too attentive to every thing but their interest." \* \* \* "My life has been nothing else since I came here but one continued round of vexation and fatigue."—*Bancroft, MSS.*

\* II. Irving's Washington. p. 178.

On the 26th of January 1776, Mr. Reed was elected to the Assembly of Pennsylvania, and on the 16th of February took his seat, qualifying himself in the usual form and no doubt intending to labour for reconciliation, or, in Washington's words 'restoration of peace, if possible, on the old ground of 1763,' but giving to the military organization a thorough support, such as it was entitled to even if it were temporary. "I congratulate you," wrote Washington, "on your election, although I consider it the coup de grace to my expectation of ever seeing you resident in this camp again."

Mr. Bancroft makes it matter of crimination that Mr. Reed took the oath of allegiance and of equivocal praise to Doctor Franklin, whom he calls 'more wary' that he did not: in fact that he resigned 'under the plea of age.\*' I am unable to see the point of this criticism; the Charter government being in undisturbed existence and the authority of the Crown still recognized. Rittenhouse, who was elected in Franklin's place and who was an 'advanced patriot' took the oath without a scruple. The Journals of the Assembly and Mr. Reed's letters to Washington (the few that have survived) tell in simple language what Mr. Reed did during his brief legislative term of 1776. "We have made," says he writing to the Commander-in-Chief on the 27th of March, "a

\* Bancroft, 'History,' Vol. VIII., pp. 315-369; 'Essay,' p. 12.

very great change in the councils of this Province, and, I hope, a favourable one for the common cause. Having introduced seventeen new members at once into the House of Assembly, the increase of representation is in those parts of the Province where the spirit of liberty most prevails, and, of consequence, our measures will partake of it."

Mr. Bancroft, who finds no merit in anything that Mr. Reed does or omits to do; who, seeing no good motive for joining Washington in the first instance, sees none in his rejoining him afterwards. Offensive to good taste and repugnant to truth as his words are I give them:

"Had Reed remained in the assembly he would have been compelled to have chosen his side and to have acted with or against John Adams on the question whether Pennsylvania should take up a government of its own. The responsibility proved too much for his nerves. He therefore escaped from the dilemma by rejoining the army and he himself gives as his reason: "I have been much induced to this measure by observing that this province will be a great scene of party and contention this summer."\*

There is, in this, an effrontery of mis-statement unequalled by Mr. Bancroft himself. It is not easy to determine from the Journals when Mr. Reed was last in his seat in the Assembly. Practically, after the 30th of

\* Essay, p. 13.



May, legislative action was suspended for want of a quorum and as far back as the middle of April Mr. Reed contemplated rejoining Washington at New York. "When, my good sir," wrote the Commander-in-Chief to him on the 15th, "when will you be with me? I fear I shall have a difficult card to play in this government, and wish for your assistance and advice to manage it."\* Indeed, in March, Mr. Reed intended going back. On the 3d, he wrote to Mr. Pettit:—"I look upon separation from the Mother Country as a certain event though we are not yet so familiarized to the idea as thoroughly to approve it. Some talk of the Commissioners, but so faintly, that it is easy to see they do not expect any benefit, safety or honour from the negotiation. The Congress have acceded to every proposition the General has made as to myself; so that I expect to set out for camp as soon as I have removed my family either to Burlington or Haddonfield and the session of the Assembly is over. The Congress are paving the way to a Declaration of Independence, but I believe will not make it until the minds of the people are better prepared for it than as yet they are." This was two months before the passage of John Adams' Resolution in terror or perplexity at which Mr. Bancroft imagines Mr. Reed fled to the edge of battle at New York.

\* Writings of Washington, Vol. III., p. 357.

On the 30th of May 1776 Mr. Reed resigned his Secretaryship in the following graceful letter to the President of Congress, his successor being Robert H. Harrison, of Maryland :

*Philadelphia, May 30, 1776.*

SIR :

The Honourable Congress having been pleased some time ago to make an addition to the pay of the General's Secretary upon the expectation that I should continue in that appointment, I think it my duty to acquaint you that agreeable thereto I repaired to New York, where I found a gentleman of character and abilities performing the services of that office to the satisfaction of the General. As my first acceptance of the office was purely accidental and occasioned by public motives, the necessity of my continuance seemed now to cease and induced me to request the General to excuse my further attendance which he was so obliging as to comply with. This, and engagements both of a public and private nature in this Province and these only were my reasons for declining the service ; at the same time, I assured the General that if, in the course of business, my small abilities could be of any use I would on the shortest notice most cheerfully direct myself to it again. Having been absent from the General for some time I considered the pay of the office most properly due to those gentlemen who did the duty during my absence ; I accordingly, with the General's approbation, divided it between them. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect and regard,


Your most obedient servant,

JOSEPH REED.\*

TO MR. HANCOCK.

On the 5th of June, Congress elected three friends, each of whom Mr. Bancroft has disparaged, to high and responsible military positions: Joseph Reed, Adjutant General; Stephen Moylan, Quarter Master General; and, Hugh Mercer of Virginia, Brigadier General; and Mr. Reed communicated to his family his translation to this new sphere of duty in a letter, out of the middle of which ignoring, in his usual fashion, the context, Mr. Bancroft picks a sentence on which to found a calumny.

“You will be surprised but I hope not dejected when I tell you that a great revolution has happened in my prospects and views. Yesterday the General sent for me and in a very obliging manner pressed me to accept the office of Adjutant General which General Gates lately filled. The proposition was new and surprising so that I requested till this day to consider of it. I objected my want of military knowledge but several members of Congress treated it so lightly and in short said so many things that I have consented to go. I have been much induced to this measure by observing that this province will be a great scene of party and contention this summer. \* \* \* \* \* This post is honourable and if the issue is favourable to America must put me on a respectable scale: should it be otherwise I have done enough to expose myself to ruin. I



have endeavoured to act for the best and hope you will think so.\*

### III. THE ADJUTANT-GENERALSHIP IN 1776.

Mr. Bancroft finds a bad motive in Mr. Reed's accepting the Adjutant-Generalship and a worse one in his relinquishing it but he has not a word to say of the fidelity and zeal with which, during the most anxious months of the war, its irksome duties were discharged. I appeal from this unjust silence to the unquestioned record. Colonel Reed was in active service, in the field, in battle, watching the discipline or as may be said the police of the camp, for there was then none of the complex military apparatus of later days and attending to the most vexatious matters of detail. Such were his thankless duties as described, a year later, in the earnest words I quoted in my Reply.† He was at Washington's side within the lines of Brooklyn; aiding him in the delicate negotiation with Sir William Howe; with him in the retreat from New York; with him under fire on the heights of Harlaem; with him at Kingsbridge and at White Plains; with him when watching the catastrophe of Fort Washington; with him on the retreat over the

\* Life of Reed, Vol. I., p. 190.

† Reply, p. 117.

Hackensack, and yet of all this, Mr. Bancroft has but one word to say and that is, as evidence of Colonel Reed's 'disloyalty,' to exhibit the fragment of a letter, the genuineness of which he knows was long ago questioned and which, but that it discredited a Pennsylvania soldier, Mr. Bancroft would have rejected. He culls from Gordon and Stedman part of a letter which, they say, Reed wrote to "a member of Congress" on the 4th of July, '76. It is in these words:—

"With an army of force before and a secret one behind we stand on a point of land with six thousand old troops (if a year's service of about half, can entitle them to the name) and about fifteen hundred new levies of this province, many disaffected and more doubtful. In this situation we are; every man in the army, from the general to the private (acquainted with our true situation) is exceedingly discouraged. *Had I known the true posture of affairs, no consideration would have tempted me to have taken an active part of this scene;* and this sentiment is universal."\*

The italics are Mr. Bancroft's and yet as I have said he knew perfectly well that, years ago, as far back as 1847, the opinion was expressed that this letter was spurious or that it was mis-dated.† On the 26th of June, Mr. Reed wrote to his wife: "If the enemy put off their arrival a little longer we shall be well prepared to receive them. The post at Kingsbridge is a very

\* Gordon, Vol. II., p. 278.

† Life of Reed, Vol. I., p. 194.



strong one and occupied by troops who, I believe, will do their duty. We now have powder plenty. In short, if our attention is not drawn Northward by Burgoyne who is certainly arrived there, I think we shall do very well here." On the 27th he says: "Our lot is cast in very difficult and troubled times, in which our utmost fortitude is necessary; nor do I despair, if the country is animated with a suitable spirit; but, if that fails, our cause will be desperate indeed, as we have proceeded such lengths that unless we go further we shall be branded most justly as the basest and meanest of mankind. Nor shall I think any indignity or subjection too degrading to us. Instead of contesting about or settling forms of government we must now oppose the common enemy with spirit and resolution or all is lost." On the 1st of July he wrote: "Troops are coming in fast and if they defer an attack any time we shall have a number to cope with them. Everything, I hope, my dear creature, will turn out right and we shall again enjoy many happy days together;" and on the 3d: "We cannot find that Howe has brought any foreigners with him; if so I hope we shall be able to keep him at bay some time at least. The summer is now pretty well wasted. If this army can be kept from penetrating the the country or getting possession of this place, America is saved."

It was the collation of the Gordon extract, with these hopeful, cheering utterances of Mr. Reed's inner thoughts, together with the fact that the army before New York consisted at that time, not of Six but of Eight thousand effective men exclusive of the 'new levies' which convinced me years ago (and I am of that opinion still) either that this letter was spurious or that it was misdated. The phrase 'a secret army behind,' has no meaning and I observe that Mr. Force, who scrutinizes everything, does not think this garbled extract worth printing.\* Had the date been September, after the disaster on Long Island, there would have been more verisimilitude in it for, then, Mr. Reed wrote to his wife: "My country will, I trust, yet be free, whatever may be our fate, who are cooped up or are in danger of being so on a tongue of land where we ought never to have been," and Washington said: "Till of late I had no doubt of defending this place; nor should I have yet if the men would do their duty—but this I despair of."

Of course, the Gordon-Stedman extract is highly relished by Mr. Bancroft. He used it five years ago in his Eighth Volume and he now reproduces it in his 'Essay', carefully avoiding all allusion to the rest of Mr.

\* "Mr. Force of Washington City, whose success in collecting materials for American History is exceeded only by his honest love of historic truth."—Bancroft, VI., Introduction, p. 9.

Reed's correspondence, so confident and so cheerful in the midst of gloom. Of the episode of the Howe negotiation which belongs to this period I have already spoken.\*

I now come to the relinquishment of the Adjutant-Generalship which Mr. Bancroft describes as an act of secret pusillanimity which was frustrated in the first instance by 'a rebuke' from Washington, and as having been contemplated for a long time and studiously concealed.

Mr. Bancroft publishes, as I did, the two letters to Congress of the 28th of November, and 2nd of December, but neither he nor I (I because it escaped my attention when I was preparing my pamphlet and he because it disproves the dark suspicions which on this subject he cherishes) printed the letter of the 1st of October, in which, to a Committee of Congress, Mr. Reed communicated his intention to resign. It seems to me a very straight-forward letter, stating the writer's wishes, written too, not at a moment of gloom for October 1776 was relatively a cheerful month in the 'Rebel' camp. It was soon after the skirmish near Harlaem and before Fort Washington was threatened. It seems but common justice to attribute a direct purpose to this letter.

\* Reply, p. 15.

“Your departure from this place,” he wrote to the committee of Congress, “earlier than I expected obliges me to communicate to you this way what I intended to have done in person. I observe that the Congress in the establishment of a new and permanent army have very properly reserved the appointment of General Officers to themselves. As the Department I now have the honour to hold is in that class and of very great importance to the public safety and welfare, I think it my indispensable duty to acquaint you as early as possible that I find my apprehensions of not being able to fill it to advantage to the public and satisfaction to myself, have been too well realised to allow me to continue in it. If there is any Department in the Army which should be filled by one who has made Arms his profession, it is this, and I doubt whether any abilities or reading can supply the deficiency of practice. In a well-regulated army it is a post of great concern and difficulty and always filled by some officer of the greatest experience: how much more necessary must it be in ours, where the greatest part are un-informed of their duty and the frequent changes keep us constantly ignorant. To set out with the new troops; to lead them on step by step in the various duties of the camp, the parade and the field; to establish one system of exercise through the whole, so that the machine though large may move with ease, will require an officer to whom the minute duties are familiar and whose knowledge and experience will claim respect in his discharge of greater ones. I feel myself often at a loss in the former and inexpressibly so in the latter: to continue therefore in an office which may be filled by a man of capacity when I am sensible of my deficiencies would, in my opinion, be unbecoming a man of character and honour. In the new arrangement, therefore, to be made, you will be pleased to consider this department as one to be provided for, and the sooner, I apprehend, the better. The General’s friendship and partiality would doubtless induce him to retain me with him and supply my own defects from his own knowledge and application to business, both of which are

very great. I have not therefore as yet acquainted him with my intentions, but I beg you will do me the justice to believe that neither a regard to private interests, personal danger, or dissatisfaction with the service, but a single eye to the public service has actuated me on this occasion. I shall not hesitate to apply the little knowledge and experience I have acquired to the public service in a channel through which I can serve it with satisfaction and honour, but I cannot continue in an important department where the public and my own character will eventually suffer.”\*

Really, this sounds like good sense and good feeling, and the hurried importunity of “the sooner the better” as represented by Mr. Bancroft, fades away into innocence in the reasonable wish for an early decision. The same may be said as to the reasons for not mentioning it to the Commander-in-chief. He does not say that Washington thought the public interest required him to remain.

But I regret being obliged, on this head, to charge and to prove on Mr. Bancroft another mis-quotation almost as gross as in the Donop matter. It will not be difficult to make this apparent to the eye.—Mr. Bancroft thus professes to quote, as illustrative of Mr. Reed’s growing timidity, a letter to his wife:

“On the 11th of October, Joseph Reed wrote to his wife :

‘You ask me what I propose to do? It is a difficult question to answer. My idea is shortly this, that if France or some other

\* Force, Archives, p. 826. This letter I had not seen when my biography was published.



foreign power does not interfere, or some feuds arise among the enemy's troops, we shall not be able to stand next spring. \* \* \* But if the enemy should make a vigorous push, I would not answer for our success at any time. \* \* \* I have not the least desire to sacrifice you and them [my dear children] to fame. \* \* \* My estate is no object of confiscation, my rank is not so high as to make me an example. \* \* \* From what I can learn from Philadelphia, there is a considerable party for absolute and unconditional submission. \* \* \* A person must be in the secret to know the worst of our affairs.' '\*'

I now print the whole passage as it was written, begging the reader to observe that the parts in italics are carefully suppressed by Mr. Bancroft and that they are passages which disprove the whole theory of despair: sentences are actually cut in half.

"You ask me what I propose to do? It is a difficult question to answer, my idea is shortly this, that if France, or some other foreign power does not interfere, or some feuds arise among the enemy's troops, we shall not be able to stand till next spring. *If we keep our ground this fall, which we may do if a good supply of blankets and clothing can be had, and there is no disappointment in the provision to be made for the camp from the Northward;* but if the enemy should make a vigorous push, I would not answer for our success at any time. *In the course of this winter it will be seen what expectations can be had of the interference of a foreign power, in which event I have no doubt the liberties of America may be established on the most permanent footing. Should this happen, as I never meant to make arms a profession, my duty to you and my dear children will lead me to pursue that course of life, which will contribute most to their and your happiness, for though I*

\* Essay, p. 17.

would wish to serve my country, and would not spare myself in the work, I have not the least desire to sacrifice you and them to fame, even if I was sure to attain it. Should there be no such interference, my estate is no object of confiscation, my rank is not so high as to make me an example, and at all events I have only to set out in the world anew. The accounts I have from Philadelphia are very unfavourable. From what I can learn there is a considerable party for absolute and unconditional submission. James Allen was here the other day, with a view to discover, I suppose what prospect we had, so that the party might take their measures accordingly. I fancy things did not please him, as a person must be in the secret to know the worst of affairs." And then he adds, and this of course Mr. Bancroft keeps out of sight: "If the enemy inclines to press us, it is resolved to risk an engagement, for if we cannot fight him on this ground, we can on none in America."

Is this fair play? Is it not kindred to literary *crimen falsi*, 'the fraudulent alteration of a writing to the prejudice of another man's right?':\*

It was in this letter that Mr. Reed repeated to his wife his intention to resign 'at the close of the campaign,' an intention which would have been carried into effect sooner, but for the stirring events which intervened. From the evacuation of New York Island, till the retreat across the Raritan, there was no repose—no intermission of active and responsible duty. Mr. Reed meant to resign in October, but postponed it in the emergency which then arose. He did resign in December, and

\* So Blackstone defines 'forgery' of which the punishment once was the pillory.

again withdrew it in view of a kindred emergency and for the same reason, and Mr. Bancroft has to invent the 'rebuke' from Washington as the only means of depreciating Mr. Reed's motives and disparaging his conduct. He retracted his resignation the instant he saw there was need for his services and went to the field and fought during the remnant of this year, and the next, and the next, till the British after the doubtful conflict at Monmouth in June, 1778, withdrew finally from the Middle States.

The facts in the order of time are these,—and a simple statement of them is the best answer to Mr. Bancroft :

On the 22nd of November, Washington, then at Newark, sent Colonel Reed to Governor Livingston. He believed he could make a stand at the Raritan. The New Jersey Executive, and what survived of the Legislature did all they could, and, so far, Mr. Reed's mission was successful. 'The Legislature' wrote Livingston to Washington, 'has made provision for raising four battalions of eight companies each, and ninety men to be enlisted till the 1st of April, which will be carried into execution with all possible despatch.' "Governor Livingston" Washington wrote to Congress "is exerting himself to throw in every assistance." On the 28th or 30th, Colonel Reed feeling assured that the campaign was closed and that the armies would go

into winter quarters at or near the Raritan, sent his resignation as Adjutant-General to Congress, but even then it was not an absolute one. "As the season," he says, "will not admit of further military operations (unless the enemy attempt an incursion into this Province, in which case I shall most cheerfully devote myself to any further service) I beg leave to inclose the commission, &c."\* Mr. Reed in his pamphlet says that the enemy had advanced to Brunswick, where they proposed to finish the campaign. Mr. Bancroft says 'they had not advanced to Brunswick, and had not proposed

\* Bancroft [ 'Essay,' p. 19.] says : "This time Reed took the very unusual and very effectual course of getting rid of his commission by inclosing the instrument itself to Congress." This manner of resigning in those days was not so unusual as Mr. Bancroft imagines. On the 1st of November, 1781, Robert Morris wrote to the President of Congress : "I have the honour of *enclosing* to your Excellency, and pray you will *deliver* to the United States in Congress, the commission by which I was appointed Superintendent of their Finances," [Diplomatic Correspondence, Vol. XII., p. 502.] and we read that on the 23d December, 1783 : "Washington advanced and *gave his commission* into the hands of the President." In the order of proceedings on that occasion it was provided : "4. After a proper time for the arrangement of spectators, silence is to be ordered by the Secretary, if necessary, and the President is to address the General in the following words : 'Sir, The United States in Congress assembled are prepared to receive your communications.'" Whereupon the General is to arise, and address Congress ; after which *he is to deliver his commission* and a copy of his Address to the President. [Sparks' Writings of Washington, Vol. VIII., p. 509.] "Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action, and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body under whose order I have so long acted, *I here offer my commission* and take my leave of all employments of public life."

to finish the campaign.' I affirm, in spite of this bold averment, that the enemy did mean, then and there, to finish the campaign. The evidence of this, and Mr. Bancroft presumed much on the ignorance of his readers when he denied it, is the official letter of Sir William Howe, from which I extract a few words:—"On the 30th of November" he says "the troops, being on the eve of going into winter cantonments, I trouble your Lordship with this separate letter. \* \* \* In consequence of my expectation that Lord Cornwallis, will shortly be in possession of *East Jersey*, I propose to quarter a large body of troops in that district, without which we should be under much difficulty to find covering, forage, and supplies of fresh provisions for the army. The plan of the enemy, by their public orders, is to destroy all species of forage and stock as they retire before his majesty's troops, which I am hopeful they will not have time to accomplish, and their further design seems to be to retreat behind the Raritan river, or perhaps behind the Delaware, to cover Philadelphia."—He then states his plan for "the next campaign" part of which was: "A defensive army of 8,000 men to cover Jersey, and to keep the Southern army in check, by giving a jealousy to Philadelphia, which I would propose to attack in the Autumn." "My first design" he wrote afterwards "extending no further than to get and keep possession of East Jersey, Lord Cornwallis had orders not to ad-



vance beyond Brunswick." The change which took place in the enemy's movements was a sudden one. How sudden, will appear from the context of the letter of Sir William Howe which I have just cited and to which the reader is referred. At half-past seven, in the evening of the 1st of December, the British advance appeared on the heights of the Raritan, pushing for the crossing place and then, and not till then, Washington determined to retreat west of the Delaware. During the day, for the advance from Elizabethtown was of course soon known, Washington had written to Livingston and sent his message to Reed who instantly on receiving it wrote to the President of Congress, retracting the resignation and announcing his intention at once to re-join the army, which he did, for, on the 7th and 8th, we find him with Washington between Trenton and Princeton in active duty. On the 7th, Reed wrote to Congress "we set out this morning for Princeton. In our way we met a messenger with the enclosed." On the 8th, Washington writes: "Colonel Reed will inform you of the intelligence which I first met with on the road from Trenton to Princeton."

What braver or more manly course can be imagined, for, within ten days, the whole policy of the enemy having been changed, the duty of American officers was changed too, and, instead of a winter campaign on the Raritan, with all its dull annoyances, in apprehension

or appreciation of which Mr. Reed resigned, there was to be an active advance by the enemy when the duties of every man were clear. On the first whisper of this, the resignation was withdrawn and the post of danger resumed, and resumed with so much zeal and activity that, as we know, on the 23d of December, Washington wrote a most confidential letter to Reed as to the attack on Trenton, and a month later, rebuke or no rebuke,—discontent or not, offered and pressed him to accept the command of the Cavalry. “I beg leave” he wrote “to recommend Colonel Reed to the command of the horse as a person in my opinion in every way qualified; for he is extremely active and enterprising, many signal proofs of which he has given this campaign.” On the 24th of May '77, Washington wrote to Colonel Moylan; “If Congress, have it not in contemplation to assign one of the brigadiers already appointed to that command, I shall assuredly place General Reed there; as it is agreeable to my own recommendation and original design; and of this, please in my name, inform him.—I would have written to General Reed myself on this subject and other matters, but my extreme hurry will not permit me to do it fully, and therefore I decline it altogether. Be so obliging as to offer my best regards to him, and assure him I read his name in the appointment of Brigadiers with great pleasure.”

Thus disappears another malicious fiction. But Mr. Bancroft is not easily driven from the scent. Not satisfied with defaming Mr. Reed, he pursues the women and children and has the incredible effrontery (audacity is too brave a word) to say that Mr. Reed meditating desertion voluntarily placed his wife (whose heroism extorts praise even from Bancroft) and little children as hostages in the enemy's hands. This infamous passage, for such I pronounce it, I give in Mr. Bancroft's words:—

A patriot father, who loves his wife and children, would naturally place them in a time of danger where he could most certainly rejoin them without changing sides. Reed writes on the second that he will attend to his office "as soon as I have disposed of Mrs. Reed and my children." It was a matter of import in whose hands he would leave them, and he had a choice. Had he sent his wife and children in the ferry-boat across the river from Burlington to the Pennsylvania side, they would have been among the patriots. He chose to send Mrs. Reed and her family into a part of New Jersey where they remained, as William B. Reed expresses it, "literally in the possession of the enemy." Thus in December, 1776, Joseph Reed, having his choice of a place of refuge, placed, to use his own words, "a wife and four children in the enemy's hands. So soon as he had thus disposed of his wife and children, as hostages to the British, Reed repaired to the camp of Washington, and crossed the Delaware with the American army."

When, in my memoir of Esther Reed, I spoke of her and her little children as being 'literally in the possession of the enemy' I little dreamed that phrases, not perhaps strictly exact, could be so perverted. When

Mr. Reed in writing to Washington, on the 22nd of December 1776, spoke of his wife and four little children as 'in the enemy's hands' it never, we may assume, entered his mind that any censorious critic, of his own or a future day, would accuse him of intentionally putting his family as hostages in the enemy's hands and of the incredible stupidity or audacity of communicating the fact of having done so to his own commanding officer. Yet this is exactly what Mr. Bancroft accuses him of doing. It was on the 2nd of December, that Mr. Reed spoke of disposing of Mrs. Reed and her children. They were then at Burlington. Their ultimate place of refuge was at the little town or township of Evesham, seven or ten miles south-east of Burlington and on the edge of the pine forest of New Jersey. Lord Cornwallis and the Hessians had not made their dashing advance, and when they did, the objective point was Trenton and the upper passes of the Delaware. No place of greater apparent safety could have been selected than the edge of these forests into which no enemy could or would be willing to penetrate and from which an escape could be made at Cooper's ferry, now Camden, or even lower down, at Salem. It was the sudden advance of the Hessians into West Jersey, which threatened to cut off communication with these helpless fugitives. Writing of it to her brother in England, Mrs. Reed says: "You cannot form any adequate idea of the scenes we have passed. Thank

God our apprehensions and fears have not been altogether realised, but they were sufficient. But one day's escape from an army of foreigners, and for several weeks within a few hours march of them, and since they have been driven back, we have understood they had planned a visit to our retreat. Nothing could be more distressing but the dreadful reality. But a kind and overruling Providence preserved us from those dangers we feared, and our retreat has been safe and comfortable."

It must indeed be a diseased imagination which can see in this state of facts the dark and despicable iniquity which Mr. Bancroft has conjured up.

#### IV. THE LEE CORRESPONDENCE.

It is with great repugnance that I recur to this well-worn topic and should not do so but for the new gloss which Mr. Bancroft now tries to put upon it. Writing on this subject in 1859, I had occasion to say, and I now repeat, that it has always seemed to me that this matter has been much exaggerated.\* Mr. Reed wrote to Lee, then at the height of his fame and fresh from his Southern campaign, that Fort Washington had fallen in consequence of indecision on the part of the Commander-in-chief. No one doubts now and no one doubted then

\* Correspondence with John C. Hamilton. *Historical Magazine*, December, 1866.



that, in this, he said the actual truth. Washington himself said: 'Contradictory opinions caused a warfare and hesitation in my mind which ended in the loss of the Fort.' Without desiring to appeal from any fair though adverse judgment on the propriety or discretion of the Adjutant-General writing to Lee, I do most earnestly protest against Mr. Bancroft's exaggerated and malignant judgment that it was an 'intrigue' or a 'calumny.' It was neither. Nay further, if Washington was hurt, as he no doubt was, at the correspondence, let it be remembered it was not Reed's letter but Lee's answer which he saw, and Lee's answer very much exaggerates what was written to him. There was nothing in Mr. Reed's letter about 'fatal indecision of mind, or 'stupidity' or 'want of personal courage' or decisive or indecisive blunderers'—or 'the curse of indecision.' All these were Lee's phrases and seemed to be the echoes of what Mr. Reed had said, and this, for a time, gave Washington pain. He said it was the apparent "echo that hurt him."

But Mr. Bancroft is not content with the common use made of this correspondence. He improves upon it, by making it the basis of a new accusation, and to this alone I direct my attention. He says that, when in March, 1777, Mr. Reed wrote to General Washington that he hoped to get from Lee, then a prisoner, a copy of his letter of 21st November, he "had at that time in his

possession a draft or copy of it," and as evidence of this, Bancroft cites Mr. Moore's 'Treason of Lee.' A more mischievous imagining than this has not yet been exposed. In March, 1777, Mr. Reed said he had neither copy nor draft. in July, 1779, when Lee was at liberty, and open in his hostility both to Washington and Reed, writing pamphlets so violent that printers would not publish them, Mr. Reed repeated this denial and gave what, according to his recollection, was the purport of the letter. He made a mistake in saying it was written before the fall of Fort Washington which he certainly would not have done if he had the copy and the date before him. When I prepared my Biography, I was under the impression, and so stated, that the letter never was recovered in the life time of the writer, adding "among my papers is a copy attested by a Mr. Eustace." My judgment enlightened by more careful scrutiny of the document itself, and not a little by conference with the accomplished and intelligent author of 'The Treason of Lee,' is that I was mistaken and that Mr. Reed did recover a copy of the letter but not till long afterwards. Eustace, who attests my copy, was Major John Skey Eustace, once an Aid of Charles Lee, and in the autumn of 1779, on President Reed's staff when he took the field in the co-operative movement against New York. The probability is that Eustace furnished these copies, late in that year or in the next, to Mr. Reed. My

reasons for thinking Mr. Reed did at some time afterwards receive the copy is the very passage in the 'Treason of Lee' which Mr. Bancroft refers to, but which with his usual want of frankness he does not venture to quote. Mr. Moore says: 'The following letter is already famous in the history of that period. The copy I use has been corrected by a careful comparison with one "signed by Reed, and indorsed in his own hand."' The passage in quotation marks is Mr. Tefft's the well known autograph collector now dead, and not Mr. Moore's. While, with some experience in this matter of comparison of hands in ancient manuscripts, I suspend my judgment until I see the paper, I am quite willing to admit that it is quite probable the copy is 'endorsed' by Mr. Reed. If so, it settles the question as to recovering the paper at some time, but neither Mr. Moore, nor Mr. Tefft, nor any one else except Mr. Bancroft, whose credulity where evil is to be imputed is excessive, ever said or meant to say that the copy was in Mr. Reed's possession on either occasion when he disavowed it, either to Washington in 1777, or to the public in 1779. If then, there is no proof whatever that Mr. Reed had the copy when he said he had not, have I not a right to say that here, as everywhere, Mr. Bancroft stands convicted of wanton and wilful defamation? All this was for years under the scrutiny of Washington's honest biographers, Marshall and Sparks, and Irving, and this infamy of

Mr. Reed eluded their pure and bright vision to be revealed to the darkened and oblique optics of Mr. Bancroft.\*

#### V. THE CADWALADER AND RUSH ACCUSATION.

If reluctant to say a word on the subject I have just examined, I am still less inclined to re-open the discussion of the charges which General Cadwalader and Dr. Rush made in 1783. But I have no choice; for not only do the supplementary strictures of the Bancroft 'Essay' demand some notice, but new information has come into my hands which duty to the cause of truth compels me to disclose.

The after-discovered testimony is this :

It will be recollected that in the Cadwalader pamphlet is a letter or certificate of Alexander Hamilton, dated in 1783, in Philadelphia, in which he says : " I cannot, however, with certainty remember more than this ; that

\* Not pretending to have produced, twenty years ago, a biographical work, free from mistakes, I do not hesitate to acknowledge that I was in error in ascribing to Lee the credit of the evacuation of New York Island in 1776 (to prove which Mr. Bancroft devotes, not only a section of his Essay, but an elaborate note in his History [Vol. IX., p. 175.] but I affirm that such was the received opinion of every writer till the appearance of Mr. Moore's Lee-Traet in 1860. From Mr. Moore, Bancroft derived his own knowledge on the subject, and yet, while ready enough to cite Mr. Moore when he has an aim of defamation, he has no word of acknowledgment of what is valuable, but on the contrary, claims it as his own. ,

some time in the campaign of 1777, at Head-Quarters in this State, you mentioned to me and some other gentlemen of General Washington's family, in a confidential way, that at some period in '76, I think after the American army crossed the Delaware in its retreat, Mr. Reed had spoken to you in terms of great despondency respecting the American affairs, and had intimated that he thought it time for gentlemen to take care of themselves, and that it was unwise any longer to follow the fortunes of a ruined cause, or something of a similar import."

In commenting on this letter I certainly supposed that it was a faithful transcript of the original. I now know it is not, and that a material portion was, in printing, suppressed. This was done, not recently, but in 1783. Instead of the original being 'that the matter was mentioned to me and other members of General Washington's family' it reads 'mentioned to me, *Colonel Tilghman, Colonel Harrison*, and other members of General Washington's family.'\* This is most important, for in 1783 Robert H. Harrison and Tench Tilghman were living, both of them residents of Maryland, and one of them within what may be described as a stone's throw of General Cadwalader's home on the Eastern Shore.

\* The italics are mine—to denote the suppressed words.



Hamilton's letter, giving the names, is dated March, 1783. The pamphlet, as nearly as I can ascertain it, did not appear till April or May. In the interval, there was ample time to correspond with these gentlemen and find out what their recollections were. I have no doubt they were applied to and as little, from the fact of the suppression of their names, that their answer was—either that nothing of the kind occurred, or, what is quite as material in view of the gravity of the accusation, that they could remember nothing. But why were the names suppressed, and so suppressed that neither by asterisks nor blanks was the absence of words indicated? \* Mr. Reed died without knowing of this alteration. Tilghman and Harrison were honourable men, free, as perhaps Hamilton was not, from the evil influence of Philadelphia politics. If they had been able to sustain the averment of Hamilton's letter, they would not have

\* When in the year 1804, Doctor Rush and his family begged that the remarks of Washington as to the anonymous letter to Patrick Henry should be omitted in the forthcoming 'Marshall's Washington,' the Chief-Justice said: "It is my wish that the words of the General which relate to the professions of Doctor Rush should not be published. At the same time it will be necessary, either by leaving a space with the usual marks, or by placing inverted commas. or in some other way to denote some words are omitted. This is not to be disregarded."—MS. Letter, September 24, 1804. Again, on the 4th of October he said: "I have no objections to leaving out the words relating to Doctor Rush, provided it should be apparent that certain words are omitted." This is the only fair rule, but no one would imagine, reading Hamilton's letter as printed, that there was an omission or suppression.

refused to do so. Mr. Reed had a right to know that they had declined to bear witness against him. He and those who have defended him since, were entitled to the assurance that letters and documents produced against him had not been altered. If I am wrong, and can be proved to be so by the production of the original Hamilton letter, I shall most gladly retract what I have said. As it is, I affirm the two, the original and printed letters, do not correspond.

How this happened ; whether it was the result of accident (which is not probable) or design I do not pretend to conjecture. My belief has always been that, behind General Cadwalader, who was not an expert in controversy, and may be supposed to have been ignorant of the strict rule of literary ethics as to fidelity in quotation, were more than one artful and unscrupulous man determined at any sacrifice to destroy Mr. Reed, and quite capable of suppressing or altering or mutilating evidence written or oral. This alteration of Hamilton's letter I am willing to believe was made by others, though of course it was a great error in General Cadwalader and in Hamilton too, to acquiesce in it. Be this as it may, the unaltered letter supports Mr. Reed's case, and the alteration shows his accusers thought so.\*

\* In a draft in my possession of an unfinished Address to the public dated August 16, 1783, Mr. Reed speaks of the Cadwalader pamphlet as "the joint production of the Rev. Doctor William Smith, Doctor

This alteration, by the suppression of words or sentences, of an original letter makes it important that in all cases where extracts are given, the context should be open to inspection. In General Cadwalader's pamphlet, is the following passage from a letter written by Mr. Reed from Philadelphia, and dated the 25th of December, 1776, 11 o'clock A. M.:

"General Putnam has determined to cross the river with as many men as he can collect which he says will be about five hundred—he is now mustering them and endeavouring to get Proctor's company of artillery to go with them. I wait to know what success he meets with and the progress he makes, but at all events, I shall be with you this afternoon."\*

It would conduce very much to the illustration of this whole subject if the context of this letter were given. It was written at the crisis of affairs. If it confirm, as I do not in the least doubt it does, Mr. Reed's statement of facts and contains his expressions of earnestness and zeal in the cause, it was due to him that the whole of it should have been given. That it contains nothing in corroboration of the charges against him,

Benjamin Rush and General Cadwalader," and adds "the authorship being boldly assumed by the latter." MS.

\* Cadwalader Pamphlet, p. 40.

may be inferred from the fact that it never to this day has been produced.

On this vexed question, Mr. Bancroft adduces no new evidence. His 'note books' are barren. Although he claims to have once had in his possession Doctor Rush's 'diaries,' and 'most private correspondence,' he, whose memory is so singularly tenacious of such things, recollects not a word of confirmation.\* All he does in his 'Essay' is (though he shrank from it in his History) to endorse the charge of disaffection, and to put on it the gloss which his perverse ingenuity suggests, and to which, hoping to make an end of it and him, I now call the reader's attention.

On full consideration, I think it best to let Mr. Reed tell his own story, and to quote his personal narrative of the incidents on the Delaware in December, 1776. It is becoming a rare tract now, for, while there have been half a dozen surreptitious reprints of the libel on his memory, his Defence has been reprinted but once in eighty-five years. In making the extract, I accept Mr. Bancroft's implied challenge where he says with that peculiar acrimony which the very name of Reed seems to excite, that "the pamphlet of Joseph Reed is his own accuser." I now

\* I do not believe this assertion of Mr. Bancroft that the Rush diary ever was in his 'custody.' He once, in our days of friendliness, told me it had been read to him, but that the Rush family were unwilling to part with it or that it should be seen by any one.

give all of the pamphlet which relates to this chapter of events, throwing into notes, for which I beg the student's best attention, such comments as Mr. Bancroft and kindred critics render necessary.

FROM MR. REED'S PAMPHLET OF 1782.

"It is not necessary to enter into a particular detail of the proceedings of the army for the few days they lay at Trenton, The disastrous state of public affairs had by this time brought out a great body of the Militia of Pennsylvania; when the feeble condition of our army obliged us to cross the Delaware, the militia were ordered to Bristol, and the remainder of the troops cantoned along the river so as to oppose any attempts to cross it. In every stage of our progress, on every movement, the writer of these remarks was consulted either publicly or privately, and often both. From motives of special confidence he was ordered to Bristol, where General Cadwalader commanded, and from that special confidence communications were made to him in preference even to the commanding officer, as the General's letter of the 23d of December, will evince.\*

\* Not only is the address of this letter "To Joseph Reed or *in his absence* to John Cadwalader" very significant, but its contents illustrate accurately the relations of the parties. Mr. Reed as Adjutant-General was Chief of Washington's staff on detached duty. He had been at Head Quarters and there had learned Washington's intentions to attack, though the precise time was not decided on. To him as of the staff, the letter was written referring to the attack as a thing known to both correspondents, and designating the time—"to inform you that Christmas day at night, one hour before day is the time fixed upon for our attempt on Trenton." "He could not ripen matters sooner." Mr. Reed never pretended that he was sent to be the virtual commander at Bristol' (Bancroft, Essay, p. 32). What his exact position was, Washington's letter shows.



Though specially sent by General Washington for the express purpose of assisting General Cadwalader (who, whatever his abilities were, had less experience of actual service), I was received with cool civility, and very few marks of private attention; but at the same time consulted without reserve on our Military affairs. However, I rendered every service in my power; and as intelligence was of the utmost importance both to General Washington and ourselves, in conjunction with Colonel Cox of New Jersey, every exertion in our power was made to procure it.\*

This we were enabled to effect through the medium of some persons of Burlington, with whom our residence had formed an interest. In the course of this business it was necessary to pass frequently to that place. On one of these occasions the inhabitants applied to me for relief from the incursions of our troops, especially the galley-men, who distressed them, without affording any advantage to us. As the Hessian patrols came daily to town, I observed it would be difficult and hardly reasonable to restrain our troops, unless the enemy would submit to the like restriction. It was then suggested, that such a proposition should be made to Count Donop, who commanded the British and Hessian troops; and I wrote a few unsealed lines to that effect, which an inhabitant of Burlington undertook to deliver. The whole

\* Washington's letters are filled with expressions of intense anxiety for detailed information as to the position of the enemy. Not only was the advance of the Hessians very successfully disguised, but in a neighbourhood such as that of Burlington and Mount Holly where nearly all were disaffected, much false intelligence was put in circulation. On the 15th of December, Cadwalader at Bristol wrote to Washington, (Force, p. 1230.) that if there were not more than 500 or 600 Hessians in Burlington he should attack them the next day. On the 15th Mr. Morris' diary shows that there was not a Hessian in Burlington, the place being in possession of the American flotilla-men. So cloudy and uncertain was intelligence of what was doing at this short a distance.

transaction was of a public nature, and in the presence of several gentlemen who had accompanied me from Bristol.

The bearer of my letter found Count Donop on his march to the Black Horse, and brought back an open letter mentioning that circumstance, and that as soon as his situation would admit he would appoint a place of conference on the proposition. Having thus far complied with the desire of the inhabitants of Burlington, who are chiefly of a peaceable quiet character, and from their inoffensive conduct, as well as the services we were daily receiving from some of them, entitled to this office of kindness, I returned to Bristol: But that I may close this transaction without interrupting my narrative of events, I shall here observe, that I was informed a flag came into Burlington a few days after, with an open letter from Count Donop, appointing a place of conference, which was sent over to Bristol, and delivered to General Cadwalader in my absence. The tide of American fortune soon after turned; Count Donop retreated to Brunswick, and I never saw or heard from him afterwards. This instance of humanity has been repeatedly perverted into a criminal correspondence with the enemy, by the friends of those very persons in whose favor it was exercised and propagated in a newspaper which derives its principal support from them.\*

\* Bancroft's comment on this simple statement is hardly worthy of notice. The Morris diary fully confirms Mr. Reed's narrative and so far from Mr. Ellis speaking vaguely as to the object of his mission to Donop, he describes in detail the meeting at Mr. Kinsey's office where the letter was written, giving the names of those who were present. I am wholly at a loss to imagine what Mr. Bancroft means (p. 26.) by saying that Mr. Reed and his brother said or intimated that the first communication or suggestion came from Count Donop. No such idea was ever conveyed. The only authority for the notion that Mr. Reed said he acted by authority of Washington comes from the Hessian diary. There is no other trace of it. The neutralization of Burlington was a matter appropriate to Mr. Reed's functions as Chief of Staff. It

It was about this period that, perceiving our Militia gradually dissolving and those who remained growing disheartened by a series of unfortunate events; New Jersey in a great degree conquered and submitted to the enemy; the first of January, fast approaching which terminated the enlistment of a considerable number of troops; and authorized by that confidence and freedom with which General Washington had ever treated me, I wrote him a long and cogent letter, the scope of which was to convince him that we could no longer with safety adhere to our defensive system, for which I had ever been an advocate, that the time was now come in which offensive operations must take place; that defeat would not have worse consequences than inactivity; and that the enemy's detached situation, I apprehended, afforded a fair opportunity of striking a decisive blow.\*

It is not one of the least of the virtues of this excellent character that his ears and mind are ever open to information and advice, when properly conveyed, even from persons of much inferior

did not affect Cadwalader's movements except to aid them. It was neither made known to Cadwalader nor concealed from him. It came to his knowledge accidentally and he treated it quietly, as a matter of business with which no one was so well acquainted as Mr. Reed. Count Donop knew Reed was Washington's Adjutant-General, for he is so described in the diary more than once. The inference therefore that the neutralization experiment was 'by authority' was most natural.

\* Mr. Bancroft says (p. 29.) that I write loosely in saying that no 'protection' was granted without an antecedent oath. 'The Howes' says he 'under this proclamation required no oath.' This is by no means certain. Mr. Force, a far more accurate writer than Bancroft says there was an oath (Force, p. 928.). General Cadwalader speaks of it as an oath (p. 20.). At all events there was a written Declaration to be subscribed antecedent to pardon or 'protection.' This is a record which, if it ever existed, exists still. Mr. Bancroft knows perfectly well Mr. Reed never took a protection. He does not dare to say he did. He insinuates it.

rank to that I then held. In a short time after my letter was received, I was sent for to his quarters; where he, in the utmost confidence, communicated to me the outlines of the plan for attacking the post at Trenton and expressed strong desires that in the mean time the enemy's posts at Black Horse, &c., might be kept in alarm, if an actual attack could not be made, and requested that we would concert some such measure from Bristol. When I returned thither, the freest communications passed between General Cadwalader and myself on this subject; the result of which was, that I should go over to Mount Holly to Colonel Griffin, who commanded a small corps of Militia and volunteers, and had advanced to that place within a few miles of the enemy, and from whose activity we expected a vigorous co-operation. I accordingly went over under cover of the night, accompanied only by Colonel Cox. We found Colonel Griffin very much indisposed, and the condition of his troops both in number, and effective equipments compared with those of the enemy, such as extinguished every hope from that quarter. We returned to Bristol at midnight, and on the very next day the enemy dislodged him with great ease; his corps soon after dissolved, and he returned to Philadelphia. This was the plan hinted at in General Washington's letter of the 23rd of December.

At this juncture, the plan of attack on the Hessians at Trenton was completed and preparations made for carrying it into effect on the morning of the 26th of December; when it was supposed that the festivity of the preceding day would make surprise more easy and conquest more certain. As soon as it was fully determined, General Washington wrote me the letter of the 23rd of December which will certainly convey to every unprejudiced mind, a clear idea of the unbounded confidence reposed in my fidelity, at so critical a period, when the fate of America hung in most critical and awful suspense. This letter of course I communicated to General Cadwalader; and as Colonel Griffin

had retired, and General Washington expressed such earnest desires that a diversion should be made for Count Donop, we concluded to engage General Putnam, then at Philadelphia, to attempt it by crossing at Cooper's Ferry, with the troops then daily coming in. A difficulty then presented, how we should make the communication to General Putnam, without entrusting this important secret farther than prudence and the General's strong injunction would warrant. After various suggestions General Cadwalader, with some apologies, proposed that I should go and enforce it with personal influence.\*

I accordingly set out in the evening, and reached Philadelphia at midnight; upon conference with General Putnam, he represented the state of the militia, the general confusion which prevailed, his apprehensions of an insurrection in the city in his absence and many other circumstances in such strong terms, as convinced me that no assistance could be derived from him. I lay down for a few hours, and when the morning came, a number of gentlemen, among whom I particularly recollect Colonel Moylan, Mr. James Mease and Mr. R. Peters, came, and anxiously enquired into our situation and prospects. They can tell whether despondency or animation, hope or apprehension most prevailed, and whether the language I held was not the very reverse of despair; the former may remember, that when urged

\* On this, Mr. Bancroft comments with more than common disingenuousness; indeed without a pretence at fairness. He says Mr. Reed's visit was not only unnecessary but had a sinister object, because Washington had sent 'his own precise and full orders to Putnam.' (Essay, p, 33.). He cites for this the letter of the 25th (Force, 1420.). If the reader will turn to the letter he will find there is not one word of truth in all this. Washington gave Putnam no orders, and no information as to what was to be attempted above. He 'recommended' the removal of the public stores and that an officer should cross into New Jersey to prevent the people 'from submission.' But orders, he did not give. Mr. Bancroft seems unable to be accurate or truthful about anything.



to stay and partake of a social entertainment provided for the day, I declared my resolution that no consideration should prevent my return to the army immediately ; and that in a private conversation I pressed him to do the same, lest he should lose a glorious opportunity to serve his country and distinguish himself. I was not at liberty to be perfectly explicit, but the hint was sufficient to a brave officer. Having been longer detained by General Putnam than I wished, it was evening when I reached Bristol, and found the troops paraded to march to Dunk's ferry, in order to cross at that place, and proceed to Mount Holly, where Count Donop then lay. This was part of the general plan of attack formed against the enemy's detached posts. Upon our arrival at the ferry, the advanced parties passed over without difficulty: but we soon found, that, by a strange inattention of our General to the tide and state of the river, the passage of the troops and artillery would be exceedingly difficult, if not impracticable; with the change of the tide, the ice was cast up in such heaps on the Jersey shore, that a landing for men was scarcely practicable, for horses and cannon impossible. A single hour, which we might have enjoyed with equal convenience and equal risk, if proper precautions had been taken, made the difference of passing to a scene probably of equal glory with that of Trenton, or returning with mortification and disappointment to the village we had just left. The vigorous exertions of Major (now Colonel) Eyres, and the officers and men under his command on the river did them much honour, and convinced every one, that had it been possible the passage would have been effected. For myself, anxious to fill up the part of this glorious plan assigned to us, and having often seen difficulties described as insuperable, which on trial had been found otherwise, I passed over with my horse to see and judge for myself. The difficulties I found in landing convinced me that the attempt to pass the army was vain, and these were soon heightened by a most violent storm of snow, rain and hail alternately, accompanied with a furious wind at North-East. I sent a message to General

Cadwalader, that the landing of horses and artillery was impossible. Our great anxiety then was to repass the troops without alarming the enemy, who were within a few miles, which was not effected but with great hazard and infinite labour. Having seen the last man re-embarked, and finding it impracticable to repass the river with horses, I proceeded in company with another gentleman, who was in a like situation, before day to Burlington, where we remained in a kind of concealment, till the weather and other circumstances permitted us to join the troops again at Bristol. Here we all continued near thirty-six hours in great uncertainty, but with much anxiety for the event of the at Trenton which the sound of the cannon fully informed us attack had taken place at the time proposed."

At this point, I interrupt Mr. Reed's personal narrative in order to put prominently in my text another of Mr. Bancroft's flagrant mis-statements. I give it in his own language :

"The 'President's' grandson pretends that Reed returned from Burlington before the issue of the battle was known. Not so. The testimony is all the other way. The silence and the assertions of Reed are against him, as well as the testimony of Cadwalader. Reed asserts that he heard at Burlington the cannon of the battle of Trenton; now there was but a very slight use of cannon on that occasion, and the cannon were of light calibre; the wind was from the northeast, carrying the sound directly away; rain and sleet were falling; and Trenton was twelve miles off."\*

\* Essay, p. 34. The distance to Trenton is little more than nine miles—not twelve. The direction of the wind, Bancroft gets from Mr. Reed's pamphlet.

Mr. Bancroft's meteorology and geography are as confused as his perceptions of truth. Mr. Reed does not say he heard the firing at Burlington. He says he heard it at Bristol, which enables us to determine the exact time of his crossing the river and rejoining Cadwalader. But Mr. Bancroft affirms that no firing could be heard at either place. "There was" he says "very slight use of cannon and the wind was from the north-east carrying the sound directly away." If the reader take a map of Pennsylvania and New Jersey and draw a line from Trenton to Bristol, he will find that they lie directly in a South-West and North-East course from each other, and the North-East wind would bring the sound from Trenton to Bristol and Burlington; and, if he turn to printed documents which were before Mr. Bancroft when he wrote this stupendous untruth, he will see that General Cadwalader on the 26th wrote to Washington from Bristol: "A heavy firing was heard at this place." So much for Mr. Bancroft's North-East wind. As to his artillery, we are told that the sound was of 'heavy' firing, and Sir William Howe in his despatch says: "At 6 A. M. the Rebels appeared in force with cannon, and without advancing, cannonaded the Hessians in their situation." "The heavy firing" says Cadwalader "lasted about an hour, and continued to moderate for three-quarters of an hour." Yet, when Mr. Reed says that 'the sound of cannon was

heard at Bristol,' Mr. Bancroft pronounces him unworthy of belief. One may be pardoned for wondering at malevolence so persistent and irrational. I resume Mr. Reed's narrative:

"During this interval the impressions which had been made by our disappointment at Dunk's, the apparent necessity of keeping up the spirits of the troops which were hourly declining, the daily diminution of our numbers, and the hopes we had formed of General Washington's success, gave birth to a plan of crossing over into New Jersey a second time, and attacking some of the enemy's posts. Accordingly we marched on the morning of the 27th; but experience having taught us to pay some attention to the tide and circumstances of landing, a suitable place was pointed out two miles above Bristol, and a practicable time of tide selected. When part of the troops had crossed, and the remainder were ready to pass, we received an authentic account of the success at Trenton: to which was added the important circumstance, that the victorious troops with their prisoners had returned immediately to Pennsylvania, and had resumed their former cantonments on the banks of the Delaware. This immediately occasioned a division in our councils: many gentlemen were importunate to return, among whom was colonel Hitchcock who commanded the continental troops, and those gentlemen who possessed much more of the commanding officer's friendship than I could ever pretend to. My opinion, delivered with earnestness was to remain in New Jersey, and prosecute our plan, as one that in our circumstances, admitted of no alteration; I urged the probability of General Washington's return, as soon as his troops were refreshed, and his prisoners disposed of; that our militia were dissatisfied at being so frequently called out to an appearance of action, and being as suddenly withdrawn, that with the river between us and Philadelphia, there would be less desertion, and perhaps more confidence in time of danger,

as retreat was less practicable. Amidst this clash of opinions, perceiving General Cadwalader to hesitate, and fearing he would incline to an immediate return, as a middle course I proposed going to Burlington, from whence the troops might proceed to Bristol, or against the enemy as events or intelligence might direct. A letter seasonably received from my brother, at Burlington, who had been very useful to us in the article of intelligence, determined the doubtful point in favour of that place. This letter imported, that there was reason to believe that Count Donop had broke up his posts, and was retreating. Almost at the instant of determination, intelligence came that some of our people reconnoitering a wood through which we were to pass, had descried a party of the enemy evidently waiting for us, this had nearly reversed our new-formed design; dreading its operation in this way, and doubting the truth of the information, I requested the troops might keep their ground, and I would personally explore those woods, which I did in company with Colonel Cox and Colonel Cowperthwait, the gentleman who had been with me the preceding evening at Burlington. My suspicions were justified; there was no enemy there. Intelligence was sent to General Cadwalader, and the troops moved on to Burlington, the two gentlemen proceeded with me towards the enemy's posts, which we found had been precipitately abandoned the evening before, in consequence of orders from Count Donop. We then proceeded on to Bordentown, which had been evacuated in the same manner; here Colonel Cowperthwait returned with intelligence of the enemy's retreat, and that it was accompanied with every mark of confusion\* and fear. From Burlington we proceeded to Trenton, where we arrived about two o'clock in the morning, and found it unoccupied by troops of either party. I instantly despatched a messenger to General Washington, to inform him of the situation of New Jersey, of our having crossed the river, and submitted to his judgment the propriety of passing over his own troops, to pursue the flying enemy; he approved my sentiments and conduct in a letter I re-



ceived from him the next morning, which in this length of time, is lost or mislaid. About twelve o'clock the advanced light troops came into Trenton, with directions to receive farther orders from me; which were to pursue, harass the enemy, and if possible delay them till our main body came up; but they had advanced too far for successful pursuit. After very animated exertions, both by the Continental troops and militia, the enemy preserved an unbroken retreat to Brunswick.

The Commander-in-Chief came into Trenton on the 29th December; on the 30th, the militia were ordered up from Crosswicks to join the main army, in consequence of intelligence being received of a movement of the enemy from New Brunswick. The events of this critical interval, till we turned the rear of the British army, by our march to Princeton and Morristown, though of great importance in themselves, are not material to my present purpose. I shall therefore only say, that I doubt not the pen of some future military historian will do them justice, and describe them, as he justly may (under Providence) as decisive of the fate of America."

Commenting on this modest and manly narrative, Mr. Bancroft, without a tittle of new evidence, with the consciousness that nearly a century has rolled by without evolving anything in support of the accusation which once rendered vindication necessary, with an air of superb and insolent assumption, says:

"His pretence that he was specially sent by General Washington for the express purpose of assisting General Cadwalader is discredited by Cadwalader, and still more by Reed's own conduct in being almost constantly absent from Bristol, and conducting himself as an officer at large. His despondency followed him from head-quarters to the camp at Bristol, and he said to the

commander of that post, whom he pretends he was commissioned to assist, "I do not understand following the wretched remains of a broken army." Cadwalader was a man of truth and honor; his testimony on this occasion is supported by Reed's conduct, and by witnesses to similar words; and it must be received as true beyond a question."\*

The positive denial of one of the 'advanced patriots' John Bayard, is not noticed. Mr. Bowes Reed's affidavit is sneered at as rambling, incoherent and untrustworthy. Mr. Ellis, the bearer of the letter to the Hessian Head-Quarters, is denounced on the strength of some evidence which never has been, and I venture to say, never will be produced; and Colonel John Cox, whose life, public and private, was free from stain, who lived respected, and over whose grave in this City, were written long ago by an eminent man still living amongst us, words of merited honour, is pronounced utterly unworthy of belief.† He is styled Reed's 'pur-gative witness.' .

I pause for a moment on this defamation of Colonel Cox, which, as characteristic, I give in Bancroft's own words:

"Reed looked about for a witness in his behalf, and out of all men in Pennsylvania or New Jersey, Colonel John Cox, his most devoted friend, a man connected with him by marriage and

\* Essay, p. 24.

† Clark's Record of Christ Church, p. 19.

bound to him by benefits received, was the man of his choice to clear him from the imputation. That witness makes his certificate where he is free from the perils of a cross-examination, and he shows himself most willing to appear on behalf of his friend. The accusation was that Reed had meditated defection; and his witness deposes: "Mr. Reed never intimated, nor had the subscriber the least reason to suspect, he had any intention of abandoning the cause or arms of his country, *to join those of the enemy.*" The question recurs again; and again he answers: "The subscriber had frequent conversations with the said Mr. Reed during the time of our greatest difficulty and distress, in none of which did it ever appear to be the intention of the said Mr. Reed to abandon the cause of his country *by joining the enemy.*" Thus Reed loses his case by his own chosen witness, who expresses nothing at variance with the accusation. Reed is charged with the intention of defection, and the denial is that he did not mean to do so by taking up arms on the side of the enemy. This denial is a negative pregnant, and must be held not only to prove nothing in Reed's behalf, but to authorize the belief that the witness could not explicitly deny the charge. I have not the least reason to suspect 'that Reed had any intention of abandoning the cause or arms of his country to join those of the enemy,' but only that he meditated the abandonment of the cause and arms of his country."\*

One reads such sophistry with amazement in contrast to Colonel Cox's direct and inartificial language:

"The subscriber was on terms of the most unreserved intimacy with Mr. Reed and had frequent confidential conversations with him on the state of affairs which then wore the darkest appearance, in all which the said Mr. Reed never intimated, nor had the subscriber the least reason to suspect he had any intention of

\* Essay, p. 35.

abandoning the cause or arms of his country, to join those of the enemy. \* \* \* The subscriber had frequent conversations with Mr. Reed during the time of our greatest difficulty and distress, in none of which did it ever appear to be the intention of Mr. Reed to abandon the cause of his country by joining the enemy, but, on the contrary, showed every disposition to oppose and counteract them, and the subscriber verily believes that had any such intention been formed by Mr. Reed, he would have communicated it to the subscriber ; that he never heard from General Cadwalader of his entertaining any doubts, of Mr. Reed's attachment to or perseverance in the cause of America, or any opinion expressed by him that induced a belief that said\* Cadwalader entertained other than a favourable one touching Mr. Reed's zeal or activity in the public service."

Of course, as part of the process of slander on the dead, Mr. Bancroft falls back on Margaret Morris, thus:

"It is a very remarkable fact, that in a diary kept by Margaret Morris, of Burlington, there is an entry of the testimony of a woman who said, she overheard Reed, when he took shelter in Burlington, on the morning of the 26th of December, 1776, avow to Colonel John Cox, who was in the same room with him, the purpose of setting off to the British camp. This testimony is not entirely to be rejected."\*

In my 'Reply,' I passed by this 'Morris diary' matter cursorily as unworthy of notice, and allude to it now to show into what stupid mistakes grave 'historians' sometimes fall, and how valueless and deceptive traditional gossip may become. The passage in the Morris

\* 'Essay,' p. 35.

diary, as reprinted in 1863 and now relied on by Bancroft, is this:

January 4, 1777—We were told by a woman who lodged in the same room where General Reed and Colonel Cox took shelter when the battle of Trenton dispersed the Americans [*sic*], that they (Reed and Cox) had lain awake all night consulting together about the best means of securing themselves, and that they came to the determination of setting off next day as soon as it was light to the British camp, and joining them with all the men under their command [*sic*]. But when the morning came an express arrived [*sic*] with an account that the Americans had gained a great victory. The English made to flee before the ragged American regiments. This report put the rebel General and Colonel in high spirits, and they concluded to remain firm to the cause of America. They paid me a visit, and though in my heart I despised them, treated them civilly and was on the point of telling them their conversation the preceding night had been conveyed to me on the wings of the wind, but on second thought gave it up—though perhaps the time may come when they may hear more about it.

The reader, and possibly Mr. Bancroft who, with all his parade of 'note books' is very apt to go astray, will be surprised to learn that in the original diary the name of Colonel Cox does not appear. It reads "General R. and Colonel C."—and the Colonel C. was not 'Cox,' but 'Cowperthwait' of Pennsylvania. This Mr. Reed stated in his pamphlet, in the extract I have given. The entry in the Morris diary is of the 4th of January, 1777 and the woman who retails the story describes herself as 'lodging in the same room' with the rebel officers



and listening to the unreserved conversation in which, in her presence, they announced their intentions to desert to the enemy. The whole story is on its face absurd. Colonel Cox was in no sense '*particeps criminis*' of Mr. Reed, though he was his friend and his witness.

The transition is natural from disparagement of an honourable and high spirited man who defends Mr. Reed to praise of Doctor Rush who defames him. Here, however Mr. Bancroft, in technical phrase, is 'estopped' from exaggerated panegyric: for writing of Doctor Rush, in his Ninth Volume, he had said:

"While those who wished the General out of the way urged him to some rash enterprise, or, to feel the public pulse, sent abroad rumours that he was about to resign, Benjamin Rush in a letter to Patrick Henry represented the army of Washington as having no General at their head. \* \* \* This communication, to which Rush dared not sign his name, Patrick Henry in his scorn noticed only by sending it to Washington."\*

This was before Doctor Rush was needed as a witness against Mr. Reed. The moment that became necessary, Mr. Bancroft adopts him, though in an awkward and guarded way. His praise is certainly peculiar: "As a physician 'he says' Rush inclined to powerful remedies and free use of the lancet, and in public life, he was eager for drastic measures."\*

\* Bancroft's History. Vol. IX., p. 401.

What the meaning of this semi-technical jargon is, I am at a loss to imagine; but Mr. Bancroft gives more precision to his praise when he says Doctor Rush "aimed well." As I am dealing with Rush only as a witness, it may not be amiss to see how far he merits this praise, whether his aim be Reed or Washington or Doctor Shippen or Mr. Boudinot or the many targets, personal, professional, and political, of his secret or open defamation.

He "aimed well" says Mr. Bancroft. They generally do who shoot from ambush, and never was a poisoned arrow sent nearer the heart of Washington than that sped from Doctor Rush's bow, in the form of the anonymous letter to Patrick Henry. It was dated the 12th of January, 1778, and on the 2nd of February, Colonel Tilghman wrote from Head-quarters to Mr. Morris:

"I have never seen any shock of ill fortune affect the General in the manner this dirty, underhand dealing has done. It hurts him the more because he cannot take notice of it without publishing to the world that the spirit of faction begins to work among us. It therefore behooves his friends to support him against the malicious attacks of those who can have no reason to wish his removal but a desire to fill his place. Although your business may not admit of your constant attendance upon Congress, I hope you will have an eye towards what is doing

\* Essay. p. 34.

there. If the General's conduct is reprehensible, let those who think so make the charge and call him to account publicly before that Body to whom he is amenable. But this method of calumniating behind the curtain ought to be held in detestation by all good men."

Mr. Bancroft affirms that Washington "on a full knowledge of the worst" forgave Doctor Rush.\* On what authority this assertion is made I do not know, but I do know that, in 1794, seventeen years after the date of the anonymous letter, Washington wrote to Henry Lee: "Personally I have always respected and esteemed Mr. Henry; nay more, I have conceived myself under obligations to him for the friendly manner in which he transmitted some insidious anonymous writings that were sent to him in the close of the year 1777, with a view to embark him in the opposition that was forming against me at that time."† This does not look like either forgetting or forgiving. It is inconsistent with the accredited traditions of Philadelphia, and, if there is no other evidence of it than the mysterious diary, one may be excused for doubting about it, especially when we remember Rush's sneer at Washington, a few days after his death, as the "Old Fox"—a sneer which could hardly have come from one who, having done grievous wrongs, had been generous-

\* 'Essay,' p. 31.

† Writings of Washington, Vol. X., p. 431.

ly forgiven. Doctor Rush's animosities however were rarely buried in the graves of his enemies or his victims. In 1789 and 1790, four and five years after Mr. Reed's death, he wrote to John Adams letter after letter, (copies of which are now before me,) filled with the most virulent denunciation of Mr. Reed, the accidental perusal of which has more than ever satisfied me that I was and am (for I reiterate it on full reconsideration) entirely right in the judgment I expressed, that Rush was Mr. Reed's worst enemy, as he was Washington's, and where his passions or prejudices were excited, as they always were against Mr. Reed, an unscrupulous and untrustworthy man. It is my clear conviction, and this must be my excuse for giving such prominence to Doctor Rush, that but for him, the painful controversy with General Cadwalader which has, by busy hands, been kept an open and festering sore for nearly a century, never would have taken place. Of the value of Doctor Rush's testimony, I said in my 'Reply' all that was needed, and Mr. Bancroft is not wrong in his statement that I had no alternative but "to impeach the veracity of Rush." How far I have succeeded, the candid reader must judge. I drop the subject now, waiting patiently for the day when the 'diaries' and 'note books' which Mr. Bancroft says he once so much enjoyed, shall see the light.\*

\* I have some hesitation in noticing a publication by a member of Doctor Rush's family elicited by my 'Reply,' but as it is in print and not

VI. THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1777 AND 1778, FROM PRINCETON TO MONMOUTH.

The chapter of calumny as to Trenton and its accessories being closed, I turn to a period of Mr. Reed's life which the new writers of 'history' studiously ignore,—the campaigns of 1777 and 1778, from Princeton to Monmouth. On the threshold of this, Mr. Bancroft falls into a strange mistake:

“William B. Reed, in his late pamphlet, seeks to renew the exploded idea that the movement on Trenton was of the suggestion of his grandfather, and to support that claim, from a speech delivered by a lawyer in court thirty-three years after the event, he quotes an allusion to an opinion of Mifflin, as of one who, at the time, was a member of the council of war. Now all this falls to the ground; for Mifflin, at the time of the Trenton affair, was not a member of the council of war, having been absent from camp then and for weeks before, so that of himself he knew nothing about the matter.”\*

If the reader will refer to my 'Reply,' he will find that Mr. Ingersoll 'the lawyer in court' as Bancroft describes him, did not say a word as to the 'movement on Trenton.' He said, on the authority of General Mifflin, that Washington's manœuvre 'by which the fruits of a former victory were secured and a second

\* Essay, p. 56.

anonymous, I simply note the fact that there is such a thing. It is very scurrilous and very silly. It was printed originally in London, and reprinted in Philadelphia, of course.



attained' at Princeton, was of Mr. Reed's suggestion.\* And this even Mr. Bancroft is ashamed to deny.

Mr. Reed was in service while there was danger and exposure and at home when there was an intermission of active military movement, as when the armies went into winter quarters. He was with Washington during the critical portion of the siege of Boston in 1775. He never left his side from the landing of the enemy on Staten Island in 1776 till the retreat across the Hackensack. He resigned his staff appointment when he thought the year's campaign was over. He resumed it when the enemy advanced and was among the first, if not the first, to lead the way in the aggressive movement in January, 1777.

Of this portion of his life, I said nothing in my 'Reply' because there was and could be no controversy about it, and I refer to it now only because of the new disparagement which Mr. Bancroft has attempted in his 'Essay.'

Born in Trenton and educated at Princeton, familiar with every road and path between them (for West Jersey was a wooded, broken country then and bridges were few and fords doubtful) Mr. Reed had the local knowledge

\* Reply, p. 93.

which qualified him to be a guide, and General Mifflin's testimony was not needed to justify me in claiming some of the merit of the advance on Princeton. We know of his hurried letter to Putnam at midnight of the 2d of January, and of his capturing with a squad of the first City Troop, the British picket on the back road.\* The letters published in my 'Reply' show his activity during the whole period till Washington went into camp at Morristown. I am tempted, however, to add one, never before in print, for which I am indebted to a kind friend, Mr. Thomas C. Amory of Boston, one of the 'grandsons' whom Mr. Bancroft's slanders have roused to controversy, and who has done his work of vindication thoroughly and well :

\* EAST SIDE OF TRENTON CREEK,  
*January 2d, 1777, 12 o'clock at night.*

DEAR GENERAL PUTNAM :

The enemy advanced upon us to-day. We came to the east side of the creek or river which runs through Trenton, when it was resolved to make a forced march and attack the enemy in Princeton. In order to do this with the greatest security, our baggage was sent off to Burlington. His Excellency begs you will march immediately forward with all the force you can collect to Crosswicks where you will find a very advantageous post ; your advanced party at Allentown. You will also send a good guard for our baggage wherever it may be. Let us hear from you as often as possible. We shall do the same by you.

Yours,

J. REED.

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 ON RARITAN RIVER,

*January 10, 1777, 4 o'clock, P. M.*

MY DEAR GENERAL:

I just now have advices from Amboy. The person left it yesterday between 11 and 12, they called their numbers 4000, but thinks there were but 2000; no intrenchments there. He turned off at Bonham's town—saw no troops on the road nor there, but heard there were 1000 Highlanders at Piscataquay. There are some small vessels which lay at Amboy when this person went into it (last Sunday). These vessels received the baggage of some Hessian regiments who they said were going to York Island where they expected an attack. That a number of Hessians (he does not know how many) went on board while he was there and remained there when he came away. That a number of waggons were discharging, while he was lodging there, their baggage at the houses in town. He had since heard that all the waggons were discharged except four to each regiment. He heard the major say that next spring they would march through the country. He was present when an officer came to Colonel Maud to inquire what should be done with the baggage and how they stood about quarters: he said he did not know; nothing was determined. The officer asked if the baggage should go to New York; the Colonel said no, it should go over to Staten Island he expected; and there it would be safe. On Wednesday this person saw a number of waggons going to Brunswick for baggage.

There is a great scarcity of fuel at Amboy for a considerable distance round. Gen. Howe is yet at New York. Hay was very [illegible] when this person first came to Amboy, but very scarce when he came away. From their conversation they seemed to think they could do nothing this winter, but in the spring would have a large reinforcement.

He thinks there was a scarcity of provisions among them. He met horses loaded with hay going from Woodbridge to Amboy. He also met about 25 waggons loaded with wood going into town. A great many men lay out in the open air, there not being sufficient covering.

Their picket from Amboy lies about 2 miles from town, where that road falls into the great Post road. The light horse patrol at night and come in in the morning in considerable parties. This person is of opinion that a few light horse might do them great mischief on the road between Bonham town and Amboy which is very unguarded. There has been another fire at Amboy which burnt three houses. He observed their horses both baggage and artillery, they were very poor, in no condition for a journey.

I now have a person with me who left Brunswick last evening at sunset. He says that the enemy have built two redoubts at Brunswick, one on the left side of the Post road, on a ridge between the woods and French's barn, the other on the right of the road as you go into town, about half-way between the fork of the road which goes to the lower end of the town and the barracks. He does not think there are 1000 men in the town, all Hessians. They have twelve field pieces on the heights near the barracks. Provisions very scarce among them; no hay but salt hay. He thinks they are in no condition for a march, their horses being in very poor condition. He saw Skinner, Cochran, &c., who were very inquisitive about the state of our army, its numbers, &c. He told them our army was 8000 men. Skinner said we will give them a brush. They keep no guards in the day but at a small distance from the town. From their conversation, finds them in great confusion and apprehension of an attack from us which they say will be a sudden one. This person thinks they mean to stand their ground at Brunswick and Amboy but not proceed further till Spring when they said they would have reinforcements.

Mr. Frelinghuysen sent this person in and said he should wait on your Excellency to-day so that I need not be more particular, having given you the substance of his information.

I should be glad Col. Butler might come as soon as he can. I have heard nothing of him as yet. This person says that Skinner inquired very particularly after me and said perhaps they might serve me as they did Lee. I shall write you as soon as I get further information, and am,

• Dear Sir,

Yours respectfully and affectionately,

J. REED.

P. S. As my present station would take Col. Butler's party too far from the road which I think he ought to keep, I left directions for one hundred of his men to join Col. Wines for the above purpose—the other 50 to be with me.

Mr. Reed remained with the army till Washington went into late Winter Quarters about the middle of January, 1777, and Mr. Bancroft has not a word to say, either in the 'History' or the 'Essay' except one of his habitual flings at Mr. Reed's never resuming his post as Adjutant-General, which is simply untrue.\* In July, Sir William Howe sailed for the Chesapeake, or, in Mr. Bancroft's peculiar phraseology, went "laveering against the stiff, Southerly winds of the season" and on the 25th of August landed at the Head of Elk. Then began in earnest the campaign of '77-'78. In every action except Brandywine, as to which I have no evi-

\* Pennsylvania Archives, 1776-7, p. 157.

dence, Mr. Reed was engaged as a volunteer, generally in companionship with Cadwalader. As to this, I appeal from Mr. Bancroft's persistent and prejudiced silence, to the original documents printed in my biography and especially to the private correspondence with Thomas Wharton, the first President of Pennsylvania, a man whose every impulse was of loyalty to his State and country, who died too soon for his reputation, leaving to his children and his grandchildren, one of whom I may be permitted to speak of as among my dearest and nearest friends, an inheritance which Mr. Bancroft dare not question but as to which he is of course silent.

Reed and Cadwalader were together at Germantown on the 3d of October 1777; and here I must follow Mr. Bancroft into one of the crannies from which he shoots his venom, this time directed rather at me than my ancestor.

At Germantown, when the divisions under the command of Sullivan and Wayne passed Chew's house without delay, and Washington, after masking Chew's house with a single regiment, followed with the reserve, and continued during the action on the edge of battle, the "President's" grandson will have it that Washington and his staff remained near Chew's house, and gives a statement that the halt was persisted in against the advice of Joseph Reed. Now there exists no evidence that Reed, who was at that time not in the army, was present; and further, Sullivan's contemporary account, with which the biographer was



familiar, places Washington in the heat of the engagement at the front.\*

There are in this two specific untruths, 1st: That there is no evidence that Mr. Reed was present at Germantown, and 2nd: That I, in writing of it, 'will have it' that the halt at Chew's House was 'persisted in against his advice.' These are easily disposed of: Mr. Reed in his pamphlet of 1782 says, and General Cadwalader neither attempted nor desired to contradict it: "At the battle of Germantown we fought by each other's side;" and Graydon, whom Bancroft has described as 'no mean authority,' in his *Memoirs*, says Reed was there. So, too, Gordon. Nor indeed was it ever questioned till this day of doubt and calumny—this short eclipse of truth by Bancroft. As to my claiming undue and especial merit, if the reader will look at the few words which I gave to this matter and how cautiously I referred to it, he will see how pitifully unjust the aspersion is. In Gordon's *History*, I found a positive statement, given rather dramatically, that Mr. Reed gave the counsel to pass Chew's house, and I said—and this is all: "Gordon attributes to General Reed the urgent advice to disregard the party in the house and to push on to the support of Sullivan and Wayne"—and I add "In pamphlet published by Colonel Pickering in a contro-

\* *Essay*, p. 57.

versy with Governor James Sullivan, he questions this statement and says that when he returned to Washington General Reed was not present. The statement and the contradiction are given for what they are worth. If Mr. Graydon's anecdote be true Reed and Cadwalader were in advance and nearer Conway's brigade."\* Could I say less?

To Germantown succeeded the doubtful struggles (in every one of which Mr. Reed shared, his horse being killed under him at or near Edge Hill) on the lines round the present Northern limits of Philadelphia, and in the beautiful region on which I gaze as I pen these lines and which, in its fertile repose, is in contrast with ancient scenes of warfare here, and more recent and unholy ones not far away. Through the whole of the autumn of 1777, ending in the dark days of Valley Forge, Reed was by the side of Washington. It was the time of the Cabal of which James Lovell and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts and Benjamin Rush of Pennsylvania were the leading spirits at York Town. Not a word of this contrast, of these services, or of these dark designs do we find in Bancroft.

"Pennsylvania," says he, "was rent by factions at the time of the battle of Brandywine, and it was, when these factions were at their height, that Reed, in September, 1777, was borne into Congress."†

\* Life of Reed, Vol. I., p. 321, Graydon, p. 279, Gordon, Vol. II., p. 523.

† Essay, p. 40.

Once writing of Washington, Bancroft said in his ecstatic style that he was "borne towards Cambridge on the affectionate confidence of the people."\* I do not imagine he means that Mr. Reed was thus 'borne' into civil life. The insinuation is just the other way. But he has not the candour to say, that although elected to Congress on the 14th of September, 1777, he never took his seat, thinking it a paramount duty though holding no rank and receiving no emolument, to remain in the field; nor did he enter Congress at all until a new election in December, and then he was 'borne in,' along with Franklin and Robert Morris and Roberdeau as colleagues. Of his career in Congress I note here, as a matter of pride to me, but no doubt, with Mr. Bancroft's present notions, of discredit with him that Mr. Reed was a signer of "The Articles of Confederation;" an Instrument, which now-a-days when centralism is so much in fashion, has poor justice done it.

I return however, to Reed's military career, and Mr. Bancroft's comment on it, at once malignant and inconsistent. Down to this point of time 'timidity,' 'irresolution,' 'pusillanimity' are imputed. In 1777, Mr. Reed is painted in new colours.

"It was the fashion to court popularity by proposing rash measures. Reed in that winter advises Washington, whose army

\* Bancroft, Vol. VIII., p. 34.

was in the most desperate condition, to leave Pennsylvania, and, without the supremacy on the water, to throw himself against New York; a system which if adopted, must have been followed by the ruin of Washington's fame, and imminent danger to the country. \*

Unlike Mr. Bancroft, I have not the advantage of having the counsel and assistance of 'General Von Moltke, the Chief of Prussian staff' or of 'the ablest officers of our Army,' and therefore refer to questions of strategy with great hesitation.† But in reading over the almost forgotten letter to which Mr. Bancroft here alludes, one cannot fail to be struck with its spirit, its manly energy and its ability. No one but a brave man, for he offered to take part in the movement, would have suggested such an enterprise. No one but an able man could so clearly and eloquently express his views.‡ Instantly on its receipt, Washington sent for Reed to camp whence he was accidentally absent, and where he arrived in time to take part in the last skirmish of the campaign, and it is a well known historical fact that the plan of a sudden movement and attack on New York was for a long time cherished by the Commander-in-Chief. Mr. Bancroft, of course, thinks Washington would have ruined himself had advice from such a source been taken.

\* Essay, p. 41.

† Preface to Vol. IX., p. 2.

‡ Life of Reed Vol. I., p. 344.

Reed was at Valley Forge at intervals attending as one of the Military Committee during the winter and Mr. Bancroft vouchsafes to his career in Congress the praise that :

“His ability, his acquaintance with the army and his position as the representative of a central State which was the field of action, gave him consideration.”\*

His military career, now nearly over, was active to the last. The enemy retreated from Philadelphia on the 18th of June, 1778, and Washington was instantly in pursuit, crossing the Delaware by the upper ferries. Where Reed was, the following brief letter shows :

MOYLAN TO WASHINGTON.

TRENTON, *June 23d*, 1778.

DEAR SIR :

General Reed was down with me in view of the enemy. He can therefore inform you of every thing material. I have ordered Colonel White with a squadron of horse into the rear of the enemy whose van I believe to be at this time at Allentown. He will keep me constantly advised of what passes in the rear and the remainder of the horse will be engaged on their front and left flank. You may depend on having the earliest intelligence of their motions that I can with my own observation and of the officers under me can collect.

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Yours,

STEPHEN MOYLAN.

\* Essay, p. 40.

He was with Cadwalader at Washington's side at Monmouth and shared the dangers and disappointment of that doubtful day.

And now, American reader, student of History anywhere, I confidently ask your judgment on this brief and modest military record, and on the unscrupulous and persistent attempt of Mr. Bancroft to misrepresent it. I cannot doubt what it will be.

#### VII. THE BRITISH COMMISSIONERS, IN 1778.

On this head of special calumny I prefer being silent, reserving what I have to say till the *Tenth* Volume, with which the public is threatened, shall appear. It will cover these events and no doubt will contain new and elaborate defamation of Mr. Reed. It shall, at a proper time be met. Now is not the time. I note, in passing, that Mr. Bancroft's averment in his 'Essay,' that the documents he cites came to him from Scotland from among the papers of Adam Ferguson, is I have reason to believe untrue.\* They were procured in Scotland for another gentleman who loaned them to Mr. Bancroft, and he used them without the least right to do so. This is one of his habits. He is of the gipsy race of writers.

\* Essay, p. 43.



## VIII. THE TREASON TRIALS OF 1778.

On this subject, dragged into inappropriate controversy, I am glad to have an opportunity of expressing my mature and reconsidered judgment. It may be agreeable to Mr. Bancroft to find that I agree with him and that it is a matter of regret with me, not merely that a drop of blood during the Revolution was shed upon the scaffold but that my ancestor had even a professional agency in bringing it about. Observation and experience satisfy me that a lawyer steps down from the high level on which it ought to be his ambition to move, when he accepts a retainer from 'Government,' in a capital case, especially when a merely political offence is charged. 'Government,' acting through its own officers, is, or ought to be, strong enough. In this case however, Mr. Reed was strictly a public officer, the resolution of the Assembly and the choice of the Council making him one. He was employed for a year at a stated salary and not specially for these cases. I am sorry that he had anything to do with them. And more, much more, do I regret that the penalties of the law of treason were enforced and that a scaffold for political offences was ever erected. Tradition tells us that the execution of these unfortunate men resulted from the indiscreet conduct of some of their friends who defied the Execu-

tive, at the head of which was George Bryan, a man of stern and rugged virtues, to bring them to punishment. Mr. Bancroft quotes a letter from the French Minister to his Court, reflecting injuriously on Mr. Reed, and says it was upon this occasion that General Cadwalader first breathed his charge of 'disaffection.' This is not so. It was on the trial of Mr. William Hamilton, not of Carlisle and Roberts, that Cadwalader says he spoke of it. The two Quakers were executed without a word being said from this quarter. It was only when aristocratic Philadelphia was threatened that remonstrance and counter-accusation were heard. It was when Arnold was the pet of Philadelphia 'fashion.'

IX. PRESIDENT REED'S ADMINISTRATION. 1778-1781.

"Joseph Reed proved a most inefficient President."\* With these words, Mr. Bancroft attempts to blur the record of three years of as anxious, devoted and thankless service as any American public man ever performed. In proof of this I appeal, not to my own biography, which may be tinged by filial partiality but to the Legislative and Executive archives of Pennsylvania. They are in print now and easily accessible. More I cannot do, unless I were to re-write the history of my State. Speaking of the Executive trust which devolved on Mr. Reed and the Council in 1778, I long ago said, and now

\* Essay, p. 45.

repeat: "The exigencies of such a station cannot be measured by any standard of later days. The easy administration of an established government, with the slight irregularities that disturb its action in peaceful times, has no cares or responsibilities to be compared with the perplexities, the wearing anxieties of the trust which a public station in times of revolution imposes. A community distracted by party spirit, which, though not inveterate, had the intensity of fresh malignity, an empty treasury, dilapidated credit, a currency rapidly sinking through all the levels of depreciation to utter worthlessness, and, withal, an armed enemy, irritated by past discomfiture and ready at any moment to become the aggressor, were elements of the heavy burthen of responsibility which, at the age of thirty-seven, Mr. Reed assumed. How he bore it—with what success he carried it through, how, in point of fact, he sacrificed his health and life in the public cause, I hope to be able to show."\*

Under this 'delusion,' if it be one, I wrote twenty years ago. Under this delusion, students of history have remained ever since, down to the moment, when Mr. Bancroft, with his 'hand of glory' and his hazel wand, like the German impostor amid the ruins of St. Ruth, discovers that after all "Joseph Reed was a most inefficient President."

\* Life of Reed, Vol. II, p. 43.

He passes by, as if they did not exist, the details of Executive action and the Legislative policy which the Council initiated; the prosecution of Arnold; the relief of the army in 1779; the defence of the frontiers, for the Siouxs and Cheyennes of that day were within less than two hundred miles of the Schuylkill, ravaging Bedford and Westmoreland counties; the successful and generous legislation as to the Proprietary estates; the foundation and endowment of the University; the Abolition of Slavery, so gradual in its processes as to have no merit in the eyes of Mr. Bancroft and his political friends of this day and yet disturbing no social relations and offending no prejudices; the judicial duties of the Executive, at one time presiding in the High Court of Errors, and at another, as Judge on an Impeachment; the two military expeditions in 1779 and 1780, at the head of which the President placed himself; and the suppression of the revolt of the Pennsylvania line in 1781. All this, Mr. Bancroft, of course, ignores. He finds it convenient to forget that Washington said to the President in the fullness of his gratitude: "Your intention of leading the militia is a circumstance honourable to yourself and flattering to me. The example alone would have its weight, but seconded by your knowledge of discipline, ability, activity and bravery, it cannot fail of happy effects. Men are influenced greatly by the conduct of

their superiors and particularly so, when they have both their confidence and affection." He shuts his eyes to Wayne's glowing tribute to Mr. Reed in his letter of September, 1780; "I am not unacquainted," he writes, "with the ungenerous insinuations thrown out with respect to your conduct, but am made happy by the disappointment some of these people have experienced on your arrival with so respectable a body of troops on this side the 'Rubicon,' which has produced a conviction that the citizens of Pennsylvania are not tied down to any local spot, but, when occasion requires, will cheerfully move to any point, and, in the eye of danger, meet every vicissitude under the conduct of a Governor in whose fortitude and abilities they can place the highest confidence." He conceals Henry Lee's affectionate testimony: "The period is at length arrived when I must move for the Southern army. As we pass through the city, I mean to gratify myself with a personal adieu. But my feelings command me to separate with more solemnity. Therefore, I honour and pledge myself with wishing you in writing every public success and private felicity. I do it, not only from my individual attachment, but because I rate you as one of the instruments selected by Providence to extricate this unhappy country." He does not allude to Richard Henry Lee's equally emphatic words: "The generous exertions of your State at the present great crisis do honour to the Commonwealth.

I wish the example may inspire, as it ought, the rest of this sleeping Union." He ignores the three unanimous elections to the Presidency of the Council, the cordial thanks of the Assembly, the Resolve that 'the Executive powers of the Government have been administered to the entire satisfaction of the Legislature and general content of the good people of this State.'\* He suppresses the unanimous thanks of Congress, in June 1780, to the Legislature and to the President and Supreme Executive Council of the State of Pennsylvania. All this, I repeat, he suppresses, and has the effrontery (I regret to have to use the words so often) to cite mutilated passages of Greene's and Washington's letters, and two extracts, one in 1780, and one in 1782, from the gossip of French diplomatic agents in America, not caring to say, what is notorious, that Barbé Marbois, his chief witness, was hostile to the President in consequence of a difficulty between the Council and Holker the French Consul General, and was no doubt infected thoroughly with the venom of Philadelphia politics. Sir Guy Carleton's genuine letters, which Mr. Bancroft does not print, show that both French and British agents were very busy making mischief in Philadelphia.†

\* Penn'a Archives, p. 295.

† De Marbois, later in life (1815), when he was free from the local influence I have referred to, spoke of President Reed as 'a man of integrity and firmness' *Complot d' Arnold*, p. 27. In October 1779, Doctor Rush writes to John Adams 'I shall not fail of waiting on the



As to what is called Green's and Washington's testimony to Mr. Reed's inefficiency, a few words will dispose of it. 'Greene,' says Mr. Bancroft, 'in a letter to Reed, uses these words: "The great man is confounded at his situation but appears reserved and silent."'\* This is the whole of Bancroft's quotation which seems designed rather to inculcate Greene than Reed. It is from a letter of the former urging exertions for the supply of the army, and I cannot do better than give Mr. Reed's reply, a private letter, never before in print, which shows in simple and unmistakeable form, the appalling difficulties of the situation.

PRESIDENT REED TO GENERAL GREENE.

PHILADELPHIA, *May* 23, 1780.

DEAR SIR:

In the hurry of a very busy day and the express waiting I have only time to acknowledge your two favours with the inclosure. As I have not time to use the latter, this letter is only to thank you for the hint you gave of a necessary exertion. It is made. Blaine has had everything he asked of us, except a military guard to force the people. This I do not love, and therefore, as well as because we had it not, this measure was omitted. Our commissioners, in conjunction with his, are searching for every beast, and can you eke out till they arrive, I hope our difficulties

Chevalier De La Luzerne and his Secretary. I am devoted to the French alliance.' The French letters quoted by Bancroft are redolent of Rush.

\* Essay, p. 45.

will end in that article for this summer. To help you to do this, the people of the City have given up their salt provisions which the shallops are lading, and in short, public and private exertions have been strained. Many individuals have credit on this occasion, but none more than Mr. Sheil,\* an Irish gentleman, brimful of Hibernian politics, who, in the meeting of the merchants, not only gave up his own stock, but animated others. This is the second time that we have borne our share of this kind of expedient within six months, and yet to be reproached is very hard and yet true. Permit me to give you a short sketch of our State compared with others. Out of 46 millions lent to Congress, 21 have been lent in Pennsylvania, and at least 16 by its inhabitants. There are now 20 millions due from the Staff and on certificates. There are above 10,000 rations daily issued in the State to (*illegible*) artificers, etc., exclusive of the supplies drawn by Congress, their boards, dependents, etc. Whence the waggons, horses, manufactures, etc., come, I need not inform you, nor the state of our troops in number, equipments, spirits, etc. What State has excelled in its clothing, its refreshments and kind attention to their future provision; and yet it is become a fashion to pronounce us unprofitable servants. How discouraging! I do assure you, upon my honour, that in accommodating the general service we have frequently scraped our Treasury so low, that myself and many others in public office have borrowed money to go to market. In the distress for this article, we have given up our frontiers to desolation and ruin. Our whole time is devoted to the public service, and a great part to general concern. But we cannot perform impossibilities. We cannot create a medium of commerce. We cannot repair the numerous errors which from various causes have happened, and which are productive of present distress; and it is necessary that ostensible blame should be laid on other shoulders. As soon

\* The manuscript is here defaced but this seems to be the name.

as I can find time, I will write you particularly. In the interim assured that I every day see more cause to adhere to the sentiment I expressed as to your line of conduct.

I am with great esteem and regard  
my dear General your most obedient  
and faithful humble servant.

J. Reed.\*

The fragments of Washington's letters are equally inconclusive of what Mr. Bancroft cites them for. They are from letters of the 28th of May and 4th of July 1780. From the former, he gives cunningly selected sentences and even these, as is his wont, for it seems to be an inveterate habit, he mutilates. Washington writes to Mr. Reed. "I do not mean to make any insinuations unfavourable to the State of Pennsylvania. I am aware of the embarrassments the Government labours under, from the open opposition of one party and the underhand intrigues of another." This Bancroft carefully suppresses, as well as Washington's closing words, not mere empty compliment to which he was not at all addicted: "My sentiments for you, you are too well acquainted with to make it necessary to tell you (what they are.)" He was the 'affectionate' George Washington.

\* Mr. Morris as superintendent of Finances writing on the 28th of August, 1781, to the Governor of Maryland, says: "I have not any funds wherewith to purchase supplies; no State in the Union has hitherto supplied us with money except Pennsylvania." *Diplomatic Correspondence*, Vol. XI, p. 460.

“I wish” this Mr. Bancroft quotes “the Legislature could be engaged to vest the Executive with plenipoten-tiary power. I should then expect everything from your abilities and zeal.” On the 5th of June, Mr. Reed writes a letter, not quoted by Bancroft, from which I make this extract:

“The vesting extraordinary powers in the Executive was not so well relished and it was too delicate a subject to be much pressed by me, especially, as there appeared some reluctance on this point and it is probable the House would have adjourned without touching upon it, had it not been so forcibly urged in your private letter. I was extremely embarrassed; I did not see any chance of its being done but by letting them know that it was deemed by you a matter not of mere importance but of indispensable necessity. This was done in a manner the most guarded and confidential, and had the desired effect, as they have vested the Executive with the power to declare Martial Law so far as they shall deem necessary, and which gives us the power of doing what may be necessary without attending to the ordinary forms of law. I have the pleasure to observe the measure is generally satisfactory; and as we shall endeavour to exercise it with prudence and moderation, I hope it may be productive of the good effects expected from it.”\*

\* Life of Reed, Vol. II., page 211.

So hazardous was the step considered that no minute was made on the Journals. On the 20th, the Extraordinary Powers were announced, and, as the public and private correspondence of the time amply attests, every measure of coercion to the full extent of impressment of stores and transportation, was resorted to. What more should have been done, it is hard to say; conscription was very repulsive to a young democracy, and the Boston plan of importing foreigners under fictitious contracts and then forcing them to enlist was not dreamed of in those primitive times.

On the 4th of July 1780, Washington wrote a letter of friendly urgency to Mr. Reed, a small portion of which is quoted in the 'Essay' with this strange and in some respects unintelligible comment:

"It is strange that any one should have been so misled by the sweets around the brim of this cup, as not to perceive the bitterness of the potion commended to the lips of the "President." The letter is a severe rebuke, even more than a cry of distress, and proves that Washington had come to know Reed as one who was ever thinking more of himself than of his country."\*

A more flagrant misrepresentation than this, these prurient pages, (I use the word in its strict sense), do not exhibit—and why, when making the quotation, did Mr. Bancroft omit Washington's just appreciation of the peculiar difficulties of Mr. Reed's situation?

\* Essay, p. 47.

“Nothing, my dear Sir, can be more delicate and critical than your situation.” Nor does Mr. Bancroft venture to give Mr. Reed’s answer which, tho’ in his estimation ‘enormously long,’ furnishes more than one passage which a lover of truth and justice should be glad to quote. I can but refer the reader to it with the passing comment, to which the events of our own day give significance, that the Executive officer who pauses before he puts into action the fearful agencies known as ‘Martial Law’ should be free from criticism at the hands of lovers of Constitutional Liberty. Although Mr. Bancroft, in the ghastly illumination of these our times, finds grounds of censure in President Reed’s conduct on this occasion, it is clear that Washington did not. On the 18th of October 1780, three months after ‘the bitter potion,’ he wrote Mr. Reed a letter of warm affection. Speaking of Arnold, he says:

“The interest you take in my supposed escape and the manner in which you speak of it, claim my thanks as much as if he really had intended to involve my fate with that of the garrison, and I consider it a fresh proof of your affectionate regard for me.”

And again, on the 20th of November:

“I cannot suffer myself to delay a moment in pronouncing that if Arnold, by the words in the letter to his wife, ‘I am treated with the greatest politeness by General Washington and the officers of the Army, who bitterly execrate Mr. Reed and the



Council for their villainous attempts to injure me,' meant to comprehend me in the latter part of the expression, he asserted an absolute falsehood. Although you have done me the justice to disbelieve Arnold's assertion to his wife, a regard to my own feelings and character claims a declaration of the falsehood of it from

Dear Sir, your most obedient

and affectionate

GEORGE WASHINGTON.\*

In November 1781, Mr. Reed's third term of office as President ended, and the Executive government, well organized after three years of severe trial, was handed over to Mr. Dickinson and the Anti-Constitutional party. It is no part of my duty to inquire how they administered it. Certain it is, that no such scandal fell on Mr. Reed's administration as did on that which succeeded it, when a squad of mutinous soldiers literally drove Congress, at the point of the bayonet, out of Philadelphia; and the State Executive was powerless to prevent it. Neither have I a word now to say of 1782 and 1783, the years of the Cadwalader controversy, when, as appears from Mr. Bancroft's note books, profusely garnished with venomous trumpery, foreigners, influenced by the slanderous atmosphere around them, were scribbling home profuse calumny about American patriots. If, in October 1782, Luzerne wrote (what Bancroft gladly copies) that Mr. Reed 'a tombé dans l'avi-

\* VII. Sparks' Writings of Washington, p. 296.

lisement, et paraît chargé de la haine et du mépris de la plupart de ces concitoyens,' let it be borne in mind that Greene, from the fresh battle fields of the South, wrote co-incidentally : "I am vexed to see the ingratitude shown Governor Reed. It is enough to put one out of conceit of serving the public."\* Let the American reader decide between the two witnesses. The cloud of unpopularity soon passed away. In 1784, the Constitutional party came again into power. Doctor Franklin, the putative author of the hated Constitution of 1776, was chosen President, and Mr. Reed elected to Congress. The next spring, he died and on his tomb these words were traced by the hand of one of the best and purest of Pennsylvania patriots, Washington's friend and counsellor, William Bradford :

"At the call of his country  
Forsaking all private pursuits, he followed her  
Standard to the field of battle  
And by his wisdom in council and conduct in action  
Essentially promoted the Revolution in America.

\* Mr. Bancroft at page 49 of his 'Essay,' quotes a sentence from a letter from 'John Armstrong,' dated January, 1785, when Mr. Reed was upon his death-bed : 'It is cruel when we consider the bed of thorns he has sat upon for six long years and the many disappointments, civil and military, he has met with.' I have no doubt there is some fraud here. The elder Armstrong was a true friend of Mr. Reed. The younger Armstrong was 24 years of age. Which was it? To whom was the letter written? What was the 'cruelty?' The context, suppressed by Bancroft, would be very material for it is clear from (Reed) being printed in brackets that something more was said of him.

Distinguished by his many public virtues  
 He was on the 1st of December, 1778 unanimously elected  
 President of the State.  
 Amidst the most difficult and trying scenes his Administration  
 Exhibited disinterested zeal firmness and decision.  
 On the 5th of March 1785  
 Too soon for his country and his friends he closed  
 A life active useful glorious.

These words of contemporary truth and of voluntary  
 disinterested praise cannot be obliterated by the cavils of  
 Mr. George Bancroft.

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Conscious that the public,—or such portion of it as  
 takes an interest in our history—may be wearied of the  
 length to which this controversial discussion has gone,  
 I hesitate to notice, in conclusion, one other of Mr. Ban-  
 croft's assertions, and the more so, as it is personal to  
 myself. It is the charge which I read with absolute  
 amazement that, in my Biography of Reed, Washington  
 was disparaged and calumniated!

In 1848, Mr. Bancroft volunteered to say to me that  
 "my volumes formed the most important contribution  
 to American Revolutionary History which had been  
 made for many years."

In 1867, he says: "No book that I have ever read  
 contains such libels on Washington's conduct and ability  
 as the Biography of Joseph Reed by his grandson.

At what precise period, in the long lapse of nineteen years, did this new light break upon Mr. Bancroft? It may be, that the praise of 1848 was insincere, an empty compliment, which cost little and which ought not be taken as serious. Flattery and calumny are often kindred, and Mr. Bancroft, since his praise has become valueless, is quite welcome to this solution of his inconsistency. It may be that he has changed his mind from conviction. If so, I can only express my sincere regret that I was allowed for so many years to labour under the impression, deepened by continued and rather exuberant personal attentions, that the good opinion of my historical labours was still held. I am bound to meet the judgment which he now expresses—and I do so, with the decided and unqualified assertion that the idea of disparaging Washington never entered my mind. It was the inclination of my youth, when my book was written, to reverence almost blindly his memory—and I can now, in the maturity or decline of life, say with clear conscientiousness that the more I study it the more perfect does his character appear. His memory is in much more danger, through a sort of reaction, from the stilted panegyric of writers like Mr. Bancroft who seem to think that if they praise Washington, they can safely slander everybody else. It has always seemed to me unfortunate that Virginia should have surrendered Washington to Massachusetts and her rhetoricians. His character fairly and thor-

oughly studied defies criticism. I certainly never meant to make one. More candid and truthful judges than Mr. Bancroft never said I did. No fair student of my book will think I did. It is another of his evil imaginings.

It is to be hoped—no one hopes it more than I—that this Rejoinder may end controversy. Enough, one would think, has been written. But, as I have said, Mr. Bancroft's 'History' is not concluded. The effect of the criticisms he has evoked may be to make him ashamed of what he has done and resolve to write hereafter in a different spirit. I cannot say I anticipate this. His future slanders may therefore call for further exposure. But the controversy, so far as it has gone, will not be fruitless if it puts the studious American public on its guard against an utterly untruthful writer of History.

Relatively it is of little moment, beyond the family circle becoming in my case narrower and narrower in the lapse of time, whether an historical character is unduly exalted or disparaged. But there is no measuring the mischief he does who, assuming to write History, deliberately misstates written truth, weaves wretched traditionary gossip into the record which he has falsified, mutilates and misquotes documents and suppresses well attested facts when they come in conflict

with a theory of calumny. All this, Mr. Bancroft has done, and is doing, and, I fear, till the consummation comes, will continue to do. My duty, it has been, in vindication of the memory of one who is dear to me, to expose a part of the mischievous imposture which he presumes to call 'A History of the American Revolution.'























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